Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic

Edited by

David Frankfurter

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CHAPTER 10

Early Christianity

Joseph E. Sanzo

1 Introduction

The nascent Jesus movements imagined in various ways sacred practices, actions, and gestures that we would call 'rituals.'[1] Although certain approaches to—and conceptions of—ritual remained constant throughout the first several centuries of Christian history, many shifted in accordance with changes in the socio-political landscape. In particular, the decision of Constantine to function as a patron of Christianity set into motion a Christianizing process that impacted the nature, scope, and direction of ritual in the empire. Indeed, imperial support for politically expedient versions of Christianity was made manifest in various rites, even in the unsanctioned rites of those maligned as heretics.[2] Augustine, for instance, took for granted that putatively orthodox and Donatist baptisms were indistinguishable as ritual practices.[3] Likewise, objects, such as φυλακτήρια, whose compatibility with Christianity was a matter of much controversy (see the discussion below), often cited ecclesiastical creeds and other textual elements that reflected imperially supported versions of Christianity.[4]

This Christianization process, however, took place unevenly within and across diverse institutional, material, and performative settings. Priests, artists, builders, and scribes (re)presented Christianity and Christian ritual in different and sometimes incompatible ways. Shared artistic and architectural forms

1 On the problems associated with the category ritual, see R.J. Grimes, "Ritual," in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, ed. W. Braun and R.T. McCutcheon (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), 259–270; C. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). For a discussion of early Christian ritual more generally, see R. Uro, *Ritual and Christian Beginnings: A Socio-Cognitive Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

2 For a general theory of the impact of politically supported 'orthodoxy' on 'heresy' and heretical practice, see P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. R. Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 159–71.

3 Augustine, *De baptismo* (*contra Donatistas*) 1.2.

4 E.g., P. Haun. III 51; P. Ludg.-Bat. XIX 20; P. Turner 49. For 'Christian' elements more generally, see de T. Bruyn and J. Dijkstra, "Greek Amulets and Formularies from Egypt Containing Christian Elements: A Checklist of Papyri, Parchments, Ostraka, and Tablets," *The Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 48 (2011): 163–216.

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(e.g., chancel screens) on synagogues and churches visually undermined—if inadvertently—the particular boundaries between Jewish and Christian ritual spaces that leaders, such as John Chrysostom, promoted.[5] This unevenness played out further on local and global levels. The formative traditions, customs, and experts of individual locales did not always comport with conceptions of religious and ritual authority among global ecclesiastical and imperial leaders. Patristic writings are replete with complaints of believers visiting neighborhood healers and other ritual specialists, the ranks of whom included local Christian clericals. Yet, as we will see below, even ostensibly elite representatives of church and state occasionally disagreed with one another in their respective approaches to ritual practice. It is not surprising, therefore, that legal, imperial, and episcopal documents erected bulwarks of Christian ritual that conflicted—albeit to varying degrees—with one another and with social reality in localities around the empire.

Early followers of Jesus disapproved of or established restrictions on various domains of ritual, including commensality,[6] sacrifice,[7] and public festivals.[8] The diverse phenomena commonly relegated to "magic" likewise constituted a sphere—or cluster of spheres—of ritual, which, on occasion, provoked the scorn, disapproval, or condemnation of certain Christian/imperial *literati*. In light of the thematic parameters of this volume, it is this latter area of illicit ritual that stands at the center of this chapter.[9]

In particular, this essay focuses on a relatively wide range of instances in the literature of the nascent Jesus movements and emergent Christianity in which modern *scholars* have inferred accusations of 'magic'—or prohibitions against improper, inferior, or ambiguous rituals related to our contemporary category

5 E.g., L.I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years*, 2nd. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 210–49, 466–498, 519–29; J.R. Branham, "Sacred Space under Erasure in Ancient Synagogues and Early Churches," *Art Bulletin* 74 (1992): 375–94.

6 Cf. Luke 14:1–24. For discussion, see S.S. Bartchy, "The Historical Jesus and Reversal of Honor at the Table," in *The Social Setting of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. W. Stegemann, B.J. Malina, and G. Theissen, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 175–83.

7 E.g., G. Heyman, *The Power of Sacrifice: Roman and Christian Discourses in Conflict* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007).

8 E.g., Epiphanius, *De Fides*, 12.1; Shenoute, *The Lord Thundered*, (codex DU), p. 45; D. Frankfurter, "Beyond Magic and Superstition," in *A People's History of Late Antique Christianity*, ed. V. Burrus (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 255–84, esp. 260–61.

9 Of course, the lines between ostensibly 'magical' rituals and other kinds of rituals deemed inappropriate (e.g., sacrifice) were drawn in various ways in Christian antiquity. The isolation of 'magical' rituals in this essay, therefore, is heuristic.

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'magic.'[10] As we will see, some of these cases (e.g., the Simon story in the canonical Acts of the Apostles) in fact have very little to do with illicit *rituals*; however, such texts have entered into modern scholarly discourses about magic and illicit ritual and, therefore, require our attention.

I divide the texts in this chapter into two partially overlapping sections: (1) Illegitimate and Ambiguous Rituals: Growth and Development in the Literary Tradition and (2) Illegitimate and Ambiguous Rituals: Discursive Contexts. This two-fold structure not only showcases the development of μαγεία, φαρμακεία, etc. along with their shifting taxonomic relationships to one another and to other notions of wrongdoing in early Christian literature. It also attends to the concerns and discursive contexts that formed—and were formed by—Christian views of illicit and ambiguous ritual.

2 Caveats

The focus and direction of this essay necessitate a few preliminary qualifications and points of clarification. Due to the limitations of space, this study is necessarily schematic and selective. The parameters of the essay, for instance, preclude my examination of early Christian texts that depict Jesus or his early followers themselves as engaging in (implicitly) sanctioned rituals that appear similar to those activities otherwise labeled μαγεία (or that scholars might deem 'magic'), except insofar as these rituals illuminate the conceptual boundaries of perceived illegitimacy.[11] Accordingly, this study will not address issues like Jesus' rituals of healing or exorcism in the Gospels, despite the popularity of these topics in the history of early Christianity and so-called 'magic.'[12]

This scholarly agenda also mandates that I pay special attention to the semantic ranges of and interrelations between the operative terms in these texts (e.g., μαγεία, φαρμακεία, and *malefici*). Indeed, μαγεία is not the equivalent

10 My focus, therefore, converges with what David Frankfurter has called the 'discourse of ritual censure' (Frankfurter, "Beyond Magic," 257). For similar surveys, see F.C.R. Thee, *Julius Africanus and the Early Christian View of Magic* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1984), 316–448; H.F. Stander, "Amulets and the Church Fathers," *Ekklesiastikos pharos* 75 (1993): 55–66; M. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London" Routledge, 2003) 195–262; T. de Bruyn, *Making Amulets Christian: Artefacts, Scribes, and Contexts*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 17–42.

11 For the relevant sources, see D. Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," *ANRW* II. 23.2, ed. H. Temporini and W. Haase (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1980), 1507–57.

12 I will thus avoid in this regard the vexed question of Jesus' status as a 'magician' (cf. M. Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978). See above, Frankfurter, chapter 1.

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of magic.[13] This emphasis on indigenous terminology, however, does not constitute 'emics,' *per se*. The motivating interests of this essay along with the occasional deconstructive note reside at the crossroads of 'ancient Christian ideas of ritual' and the models, taxonomies, and interests that have framed each of these components in scholarly imagination.[14]

The rubric 'Christian' also deserves special attention in this regard. My decision to include the writings of early Jesus followers—including the first- and second-century CE texts collected in the New Testament—in a discussion of early *Christian* views of illicit ritual is in no way meant to suggest a 'parting of the ways' between Jews and Christians or any other model that frames the diverse Jesus movements as a discrete religious body during the first centuries of the Common Era.[15] I thus agree (for example) with scholars who have demonstrated the problems pertaining to genre and social context in treating the book of Revelation as a distinctively Christian document.[16] The same concerns apply to the other early texts, including those outside of the New Testament (e.g., the *Didache* and the *Epistle of Barnabas*).

3 Illegitimate and Ambiguous Rituals: Growth and Development in the Literary Tradition

In this section, I analyze key shifts in Christian portrayals of illegitimate ritual. The discussion is divided into two subsections: (1) Narratives and Stories (e.g.,

13 D. Aune, "'Magic' in Early Christianity and Its Ancient Mediterranean Context: A Survey of Some Recent Scholarship," *ASE* 24 (2007): 229–94 at 236–49; F. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, trans. Franklin Philip, Revealing Antiquity 10 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 1997), 26, 30, 34, 39, 56. On the disjuncture between the Latin *magus* (and its cognates) and 'magic,' see J.B. Rives, "*Magus* and its Cognates in Classical Latin," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West: Papers from the International Conference held at the University of Zaragoza 30 Sept.–1 Oct. 2005*, ed. R.L. Gordon and F.M. Simón (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2010), 53–77.

14 On the 'emic'–'etic' distinction, see M. Harris, "Emics and Etics Revisited," in *Emics and Etics: The Insider/Outsider Debate*, ed. T.N. Headland, K. Pike, and M. Harris (London: Sage Publications, 1990), 48–61; D. Frankfurter, "Comparison and the Study of Religions of Late Antiquity," in *Comparer en histoire des religions antiques: Controverses et propositions*, ed. C. Calame and B. Lincoln (Liège: Presses universitaires de Liège, 2012), 83–98, esp. 87–89.

15 For the problems with the 'parting-of-the-ways' model, see the now classic collection of essays in A.H. Becker and A.Y. Reed, *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007).

16 E.g., D. Aune, "The Apocalypse of John and Palestinian Jewish Apocalyptic," *Neotestamentica* 40 (2006): 1–33; D. Frankfurter, "Jews or Not? Reconstructing the 'Other' in Rev. 2:9 and 3:9," *HTR* 94 (2001): 403–25.

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depictions of Simon 'Magus' and St. Antony) and (2) Lists and Catalogues (e.g., the lists in Gal. 5 and in the so-called 'Laodicean' canon). The two subsections offer a clear glance into the development of early Christian ideas about (illicit) ritual, while simultaneously accounting for literary precedent and convention. This discussion sets the stage for my analysis of the various discursive contexts into which illegitimate ritual figured (Section 4).

3.1 *Narratives and Stories*

Narrative constituted one of the principle forms through which early Christians worked out their notions of (il)legitimate ritual. Tales, which contrast heroes of the faith with flawed or evil antagonists, were often used to highlight sins and practices deemed inappropriate.

Like their predecessors and contemporaries in the Mediterranean world, New Testament authors deployed narratives in their discussions of inappropriate behaviors.[17] Although New Testament writers used words, such as μαγεία and its cognates, the stories in which these terms appear typically emphasized domains of activity that have very little to do with our redescriptive categories 'magic' or (illegitimate) ritual. Nevertheless, I discuss such narratives in relative detail because (1) they help demonstrate the conceptual and lexical trajectories of the relevant terms within early Christian discourses and (2) they have held a prominent position in the history of scholarship.

3.1.1 The Μάγοι in Matt. 2:1–12

The Gospel of Matthew's depiction of the μάγοι in the nativity pericope (Matt. 2:1–12) exemplifies the neutral ('non-magical') connotations of this word group among certain early followers of Jesus. By the time this Gospel was composed, μάγοι had a host of referents, including Persian priests/ritual specialists,[18] charlatans,[19] and ritual experts more generally.[20] That Matthew

17 For a discussion of the relevant literature, see D. Collins, *Magic in the Ancient Greek World* (Malden, MA: Wiley, 2008), 27–63.

18 E.g., Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 3.100–101, trans. F.H. Colson, Loeb Classical Library 320 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937). Philo also notes in this passage the existence of charlatans under the same name.

19 E.g., Hippocrates, *De morbo sacro* 1.80. For claims that μάγοι and other ritual experts were primarily motivated by avaricious concerns, see n. 31 below.

20 E.g., Callisthenes, *Life of Alexander the Great* 4.3. For a more robust analysis of the semantic range of μάγος, see Fritz Graf, *Magic*, 20–25; M. Becker, "Μάγοι—Astrologers, Ecstatics, Deceitful Prophets: New Testament Understanding in Jewish and Pagan Context," in *A Kind of Magic: Understanding Magic in the New Testament and its Religious Environment*, ed. M. Labahn and B.J. Lietaert Peerbolte (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 87–106; R. Gordon, "Imagining Greek and Roman Magic," in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: Ancient Greece*

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emphasizes their eastern origin (Matt. 2:1–2) suggests that he understood the term as referring to foreign (presumably Persian) priests and highlighted their exotic wisdom.[21] Matthew portrays these foreigners as the protagonists in this narrative; they not only correctly calculate the location (Matt. 2:1–2) and time (Matt. 2:7) of Jesus' birth, but they also receive a similar kind of dream warning as the biblical Joseph (Matt. 2:12; cf. Matt. 2:23). This positive presentation of the μάγοι is particularly interesting because, within a Roman context, their prophetic actions against a standing ruler, Herod (cf. Matt. 2:3–4, 7, 12, 16), could have been understood as sedition.[22]

Thinking about Matthew's treatment of the μάγοι in light of subsequent Christian uses of this term reveals important details that are missing from this story. There are no hints in the narrative that the μάγοι were participating in any kind of illegitimate or inappropriate ritual practice. In fact, ritual practices do not figure in this story other than in the implicit astrological/astronomical methods the μάγοι used to determine the location of Jesus' birth.[23] There is also no indication whatsoever that the μάγοι were associated with demons or evil spirits. Although the story remains silent on the specifics of their dream warning, the context implies that, as with Joseph, the author envisioned them receiving the dream from 'an angel of the Lord' (ἄγγελος κυρίου) or another divine emissary. Matthew, therefore, seems to have used μάγος in its original, 'technical sense' (i.e., referring to foreign/Persian ritual specialists), which had precedents in both ancient Greek thought and in contemporary Latin prose.[24]

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and Rome, ed. B. Ankarloo and S. Clark (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 159–275.

21 Becker, "Μάγοι," 103–104.

22 E.g., Tacitus, *Annales*, II, 32; XII, 52. On the significance of this legislation for Matthew's μάγοι, see C. Pharr, "The Interdiction of Magic in Roman Law," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 63 (1932): 269–95, esp. 280 n. 48.

23 See also J.M. Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition* (London: SCM Press, 1974), 116. I thus partially disagree with Becker, whose emphasis on 'Jewish' and 'Pagan' backgrounds leads him to imagine a 'subtle critique' of the μάγοι here (Becker, "Μάγοι," 104; cf. P. Busch, *Magie in neutestamentlicher Zeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 103–109). On the 'divinatory' association with μάγοι, including solar divination, see J. Bremmer, "The Birth of the Term 'Magic,'" *ZPE* 126 (1999): 1–12, esp. 5.

24 Bremmer, "Birth of the Term 'Magic,'" 2. Rives, "*Magus* and its Cognates," 67. Rives also highlights the overlapping semantic relationship between the Greek μάγος and the Latin *magus* (idem, 75).

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3.1.2 Illegitimate Ritual in the Acts of the Apostles

'Magic' has become an important theme in the study of the canonical Acts of the Apostles.[25] Yet, the redactor of this text does not present a coherent picture of illicit ritual and tends to leave out the details of the ritual practices themselves.[26] In every case, the ostensibly illicit ritual supports another, more general point or theme (esp. monetary improprieties and interference with the missions of the apostles). For instance, despite the prevailing tendency in scholarship to understand the story of Simon (Acts 8:9–25) as a premiere instantiation of what modern scholars imagine to be magic,[27] the redactor's composite story does not focus on or explain the nature of μαγεύω or μαγεία, does not condemn the μαγ-word group outright, and does not associate μαγεύω or μαγεία with evil spirits (contrast Acts 16:16–24 [see below]).[28] Instead, Simon is presented in the first part of the story (Acts 8:9–13) as a miracle performer, who initially deceives audiences through his μαγεία into thinking that he is great. He is then dumbfounded when confronted by Philip's superior preternatural skills, eventually becoming baptized and following Philip. The presentation of Simon changes considerably in the second part of the story (Acts 8:14–25), where he comes under the condemnation of Peter for trying to buy the ability to give the Holy Spirit to the people through the laying on of hands.[29] It should be stressed that μαγεία and its cognates are conspicuously

25 The literature on "magic" in Acts is immense. See, for instance, the following monographs: S.R. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989); H.-J. Klauck, *Magic and Paganism in Early Christianity: The World of the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. B. McNeil (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003); A.M. Reimer, *Miracle and Magic: A Study in the Acts of the Apostles and the Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (London: Bloomsbury, 2002).

26 I plan on developing the argument presented here in a future publication.

27 K. Stratton, "The Rhetoric or 'Magic' in Early Christian Discourse: Gender, Power, and the Construction of 'Heresy,'" in *Mapping Gender in Ancient Religious Discourses*, ed. T. Penner and C. Vander Stichele (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2007), 89–114 at 98; J. Bremmer, "Narrating Witchcraft: The Apostle Peter and Simon Magus in Early Christianity," *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 14 (2019), forthcoming.

28 *Contra* Garrett, there is no evidence of Satan lurking behind the Simon story (Garrett, *Demise*, 74–75). On the redactional layers and possible sources of this story in Acts (and a convenient summary of relevant scholarship), see S. Haar, *Simon Magus: The First Gnostic?* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003), 71–83. As Haar concludes (82), it is clear that the redactor of Acts has joined together at least two sources: a Philip/Simon source (cf. Acts 8:5–13) and a Peter/Simon source (cf. Acts 8:14–25).

29 Some scholars have argued that Simon was attempting to buy this 'spiritual gift' in order to sell it as part of his 'magical' occupation: e.g., G.H. Twelftree, "Jesus and Magic in Luke-Acts," in *Jesus and Paul: Global Perspectives in Honor of James D. G. Dunn. A Festschrift for his 70th Birthday*, ed. B.J. Oropeza, C.K. Robertson, D.C. Mohrmann (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 46–58, at 49; D. Marguerat, "Magic and Miracle in the Acts of the Apostles,"

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absent from this part of the story. In the end, Simon's condemnation is ultimately about the relationship between monetary exchange and divine gifts.[30] The term μαγεία emerges in the first part of the Simon story as merely covering a kind of ostentatious spectacle. To the extent that it figures into the second part of the story as an implicit element, Acts' version of μαγεία might also be characterized as a domain of activity used by people with improper social and economic proclivities.[31]

In the story of Bar-Jesus/Elymas (Acts 13:4–12)—who is called a μάγος and 'Jewish false prophet' (ψευδοπροφήτην Ἰουδαῖον)—the redactor condemns this figure for his anti-missiological activities. We learn that Barnabas and Paul—accompanied by John Mark—encountered Elymas in Paphos while preaching in local synagogues throughout the island of Cyprus (Acts 13:4–5). We are further told that this Elymas was with a proconsul named Sergius Paulus, who had summoned Paul and Barnabas in order to hear their message. The story concludes with Elymas' attempt to thwart the proselytizing efforts of the prophetic protagonists (Acts 13:7–8). In response, Paul directs a curse against Elymas that results in his temporary blindness. This amazing action, so we are told, prompts faith in Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:12).

In this story, the title ψευδοπροφήτης overshadows the μάγος label since the former places Elymas in direct contrast to Paul and Barnabas, who are explicitly called prophets (Acts 13:1).[32] The title μάγος plays an unclear role in the narrative, perhaps signifying charlatan or fake,[33] indicating a kind of profession,[34] or even carrying a humorous or ironic tone—the μάγος Elymas, who presumably healed several people, perhaps even of eye problems, and

in *Magic in the Biblical World: From the Rod of Aaron to the Ring of Solomon*, ed. T. Klutz (London: Bloomsbury, 2003), 100–24 at 119; Klauck, *Magic and Paganism*, 20–21. In the text, however, Peter condemns Simon explicitly for trying to 'obtain' (κτάομαι) this 'gift' (δωρεάν) 'with money' (διὰ χρημάτων). The text says nothing about what Simon would presumably do with the gift once he receives it.

30 For the redactor's promoted economic program, which emphasizes the sharing of resources, see Acts 4:32–37. The seriousness of violating this economic program is evident in Acts 5:3–4, 10, in which Peter directs a fatal curse against a certain Ananias and his wife Sapphira for keeping *some* of the proceeds from their property sale.

31 For this broader trope, see e.g., Plato, *Respublica*, 2.364; Sophocles, *Antigone*, 1055; Cicero, *Divinatione*, 1.58; Josephus, *Antiquitates*, 6.48; 18.65–80.

32 While this passage preserves the only instance in Acts of the term 'false prophet,' 'prophet' (προφήτης) is used several times in this book (Acts 2:16, 30; 3:18, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25; 7:37, 42, 48, 52; 8:28, 30, 34; 10: 43; 11: 27; 13:1, 15, 20, 27; 21:10; 28:25).

33 This interpretation is perhaps supported by Paul's accusation in Acts 13:10 that Elymas was "full of all deceit and fraud" (παντὸς δόλου καὶ πάσης ῥᾳδιουργίας).

34 Twelftree, "Jesus and Magic," 50. See also D.S. Potter, *Prophets and Emperors: Human and Divine Authority from Augustus to Theodosius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press,

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performed several curses, becomes blind based on the imprecations of Paul.[35] Whatever the case might have been, illicit ritual does not emerge as an observable feature or theme in this text.

In the other stories that modern scholars have associated with a general notion of extra-Christian 'magic,' the μάγ-stem does not appear. It should be stressed that the isolation and linking of all these stories/terms derives more from contemporary assumptions about the English term 'magic' and its range of activities than from the text of Acts itself;[36] the redactor nowhere draws an explicit connection between these narratives nor between μάγος (and its cognates) and the other terms used. The story of the Seven Sons of Sceva (Acts 19:13–17) is a comedic passage against people (specifically Jews) outside of the community, not against illicit ritual.[37] After a brief narrative about the preternatural powers of the fabric touching Paul's body (Acts 19:11–12), the redactor tells us about seven sons of a Jewish high priest (Sceva), who attempt to exorcize a demon by calling upon "Jesus whom Paul proclaims."[38] Their efforts are ultimately thwarted when, in response to their adjurations, the demons state that they do not recognize these exorcists, and the demon-possessed man overpowers them. In the end, the sons of Sceva run away naked and injured (Acts 19:16).[39] The redactor does not highlight the part of the antagonists' exorcistic adjuration, which is comparable with the ὁρκίζω formulas used in the Greek Magical Papyri.[40] Instead, he places the emphasis—via the demons—on the

1994) 157–70; H. Wendt, *At the Temple Gates: The Religion of Freelance Experts in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 105.

35 On the role of humor in this passage, see K. Backhaus, "Transformation durch Humor: Die Komödisierung von Tradition in der Apostelgeschichte," in *Aneignung durch Transformation: Beiträge zur Analyse von Überlieferungsprozessen im frühen Christentum; Festschrift für Michael Theobald*, ed. W. Eisele, C. Schaefer, and H.-U. Weidemann (Freiburg: Herder, 2013) 209–37 at 228.

36 A wide range of scholars have treated the following texts together with the Simon and Elymas narratives under the rubric 'magic' (e.g, Garrett, *Demise*; Klauck, *Magic and Paganism*; Twelftree, "Jesus and Magic").

37 On the role of humor in this passage, see R. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 474–78; M. Bates, "Why do the Seven Sons of Sceva Fail? Exorcism, Magic, and Oath Enforcement in Acts 19,13–17," *RB* 118 (2011) 408–21 at 419–20; Backhaus, "Transformation durch Humor," 229. Pervo contends that this passage is a parody of Luke 8:26–39/Mark 5:1–20 (Pervo, *Acts* 476).

38 Acts 19:13. The full formula they use is recorded as follows: "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims (ὁρκίζω ὑμᾶς τὸν Ἰησοῦν ὃν Παῦλος κηρύσσει)."

39 It is possible that this reference harkens back to the overcoming of the strong man in Lk 11:21 (see Garrett, *Demise* 93, 98).

40 The ὁρκίζω ὑμᾶς/σε formula was relatively common in late antique exorcistic, curative, and protective rituals (e.g., *PGM* IV. 290; *PGM* XVI. 27; P. Heid. 1101, P. Rain. 1). Cf. Mk 5:7. It was, however, often used simply for acquiring the assistance of supernatural beings

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improper references to Jesus and Paul by outsiders.[41] It should probably not surprise us that the redactor does not focus on—much less condemn—the ritual performance of these exorcists *per se*; Paul himself is said to have used a similar divine invocation in his exorcism of the spirit in the slave girl (Acts 16:18 [see below]).[42]

The brief narrative in Acts 19:19 about the Ephesians, who stopped practicing περίεργος[43] and publically burned their scrolls (βίβλοι),[44] does not emphasize the textual content of the artifacts (e.g., scrolls containing illicit ritual formulae), but their *materiality* and monetary value. The text only tells us about the extremely high value of these objects (fifty thousand pieces of silver in total). Rather than reflecting the contents of some 'magical' book, therefore,[45] the

(cf. A. Zografou, "Les formules d'adjuration dans les Papyrus Grecs Magiques," in *Écrire la magie dans l'antiquité*, ed. M. de Haro Sanchez (Liège: Presses Universitaires de Liège, 2015), 267–80).

41 For similar interpretations, see E. Haenchen, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959), 499; C.K. Barrett, *Acts*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994–1998), 2:910. This insider/outsider emphasis continues in Acts 19:17: "When this became known to all residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks, everyone was awestruck; and the name of the Lord Jesus was praised" (NRSV).

42 I thus partially disagree with Bates, "Seven Sons," 418, who not only highlights the assumed problem with the non-Christian Sons of Sceva using Jesus' name, but also emphasizes the importance of ritual technique to the story (Bates, "Seven Sons," 413–20).

43 The semantic range of περίεργος in the New Testament period primarily extended to the spheres of curiosity, meddlesomeness, and elaborateness/superfluousness. On the relationship between περίεργος and curiosity, see P.G. Walsh, "The Rights and Wrongs of Curiosity (Plutarch to Augustine)," *Greece & Rome* 25 (1988): 73–85 at 75. On the problems with 'curiosity' in early Christian antiquity more generally, see T. Berzon, *Classifying Christians: Ethnography, Heresiology, and the Limits of Knowledge in Late Antiquity* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016) 156–83. In what is one of the temporally closest analogues to Acts 19:19, 1 Tim. 5:13, the plural substantive adjective περίεργοι occurs in conjunction with φλύαροι ('gossips') within a discussion about older widows moving from house to house engaging in various forms of inappropriate conversation (W.D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers, 2000), 294; cf. G. Fee, "Reflections on Church Order in the Pastoral Epistles, with further Reflection on the Hermeneutics of *Ad Hoc* Documents," *JETS* 28 (1985): 141–51 at 144 n. 9).

44 On book burning in early Christianity, see now D. Rohmann, *Christianity, Book-Burning and Censorship in Late Antiquity: Studies in Text and Transmission* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016). See also W. Speyer, *Büchervernichtung und Zensur des Geistes bei Heiden, Juden und Christen* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1981).

45 *Contra* Dickie, *Magic*, 157. The clearest evidence for the association between περίεργα and terms, such as γοητεία and μαγεία, comes from later Christian discourse, which, as we will see, reflects a subsequent phrase in the 'Christian' understanding of illicit ritual (e.g., Irenaeus, *adv. Haer.* = *Adversus Haereses*, 1.23.4; Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 2.51; 7.4; *Acts of John* 36.6). Vettius Valens also uses the term as part of his complex astrological treatise (e.g., *Anthologia*, 7.30). It is important to note, however, that Vettius Valens does

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term περίεργος here seems to denote ostentatious behavior,[46] specifically owning and presumably displaying expensive scrolls.[47] Such displays of wealth and social hierarchy would have run counter to the social program promoted in Acts (cf. Acts 4:34; 5:1–5; 8:5–25).[48]

The story in Acts 16:16–24, in which Paul confronts a possessed slave girl (παιδίσκη) who was functioning as a ritual expert, constitutes the only passage in Acts, in which the illicitness or evil of the ritual practice itself constitutes a manifest feature. The redactor tells us that this girl had a πνεῦμα πύθωνα (literally 'python spirit'),[49] which gave her the ability to predict the future (cf. μαντευομένη). The verb μαντεύομαι and the nouns μαντεῖα and μάντις were associated in the Greco-Roman world with diverse predictive and prophetic rituals, including those involving the interpretations of dreams, birds, and bowls.[50] Although Acts does not mention the specific kind of mantic activity the girl performed, the text reveals that the girl's mantic abilities were directly related to her spirit possession (Acts 16:16); when Paul removes the presumably evil spirit through a divine invocation (Acts 16:18), she can no longer serve as a ritual specialist. Despite the presence of illicit ritual in this narrative, the redactor primarily stresses that this possessed girl—like Elymas—interfered with the mission of Paul and his followers.[51]

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not connect περίεργος to the use of books. The term περιεργίας is connected with written forms of divination in a letter to a group of district governors, dating to 198/9 CE (P. Yale inv. 299; cf. J. Rea, "A New Version of P. Yale Inv. 299," *ZPE* 27 (1977): 151–56). Of course, this letter was written later than the book of Acts.

46 The Greek physician Hippocrates (ca. 460–370 BCE) likewise warned medical practitioners not to attract patients through the wearing of 'elaborate headgear' (προσκύρησιν ἀκέσιος) and '*elaborate* perfume' (ὀδμή *περίεργος*) (*Praeceptiones*, 10, trans. W.H.S. Jones, Loeb Classical Library 147 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1923). Similarly, in Plutarch, *De fortuna Alexandri*, 2.5 περίεργος is juxtaposed with κατακορής (excessive, extravagant) to describe the celebrations of the Edonian and Thracian women on Mount Haemus.

47 Scott Shauf appropriately thus notes that 'if exegetes were not so quick to see magic in 19:13–17, more nuanced analyses of vv. 18–20 would result' (S. Shauf, *Theology as History, History as Theology* [Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005], 227).

48 See also the emphasis on money in the story of Demetrius later in the same chapter (Acts 19: 24–41).

49 On the meaning of πύθωνα, see e.g., Klauck, *Magic and Paganism*, 65–67.

50 For relevant sources, see those cited in Twelftree, "Jesus and Magic," 51 n. 31. For μάντις as a common *summum genus* for various predictive rituals, see S.I. Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 109.

51 In this vein, it was probably relevant to the redactor that this word group characterized wrongdoers and was expressly forbidden in several passages from the Septuagint (e.g., Deut. 18:10; Josh 13:22; 1 Sam. 6:2; 28:8; 2 Kgs 17:17; Ezek. 12:24; 13:6, 23; 21:22–28; Mic 3:7, 11; Zech 10:2).

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3.1.3 Illegitimate and Ambiguous Ritual in New Testament Narratives: Preliminary Conclusions

The narratives from Matthew and the Acts of the Apostles leave us with many unanswered questions about the meaning and significance of various terms—e.g., μάγοι, μαντεύομαι, and περίεργος. At the very least, however, this evidence implies that the earliest narrators in the Jesus movement were hardly preoccupied with illegitimate ritual.[52] This lack of interest in or awareness of ritual practice, however, would not last. Subsequent generations of Christians often drew attention to the ritual contours in their stories.[53]

3.1.4 Illegitimate and Ambiguous Ritual in Later Christian Narratives

Narrative depictions of and short historical references to unsavory characters and rituals peppered many early Christian writings after the New Testament. Many of these texts will be treated in Section 4; however, it is worth highlighting a few sources here that offer special insight into the development of early Christian notions of illegitimate ritual.

Discussions about inappropriate ritual practice, for instance, figured prominently in the late antique vitae of famous ascetics, typically as a strategy for distinguishing approved rituals (i.e., Christian) from unapproved ones (i.e., heathen). In his fourth-century *Life of Antony*, for instance, Athanasius uses μαγεία and φαρμακεία as foils to Antony's appropriate ritual practices. Thus, Athanasius proclaims—through the voice of Antony: "[w]here the sign of the

52 Even the three versions of the so-called 'Beelzebul Controversy' (Mark 3:22–30; Matt 12:24–29; Luke 11:15–22), which highlight the ambiguous lines between legitimate and illegitimate ritual practices, do not stress the 'ritual' dimensions of exorcism. In the Markan version of this story, the scribes accuse Jesus of casting out demons on the authority of Beelzebul. The Markan Jesus provides a circuitous response to his antagonistic interlocutors; he highlights through 'parables' or 'comparisons' (παραβολαῖς) that an exorcism with such putatively satanic origins would be self-contradictory (for the translation of παραβολή as 'comparison,' see A.Y. Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, Hermeneia [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007], 231). The Matthean and Lukan versions of this story likewise legitimate Jesus' exorcistic ministry on account of its source and authority in God. For the three evangelists, the legitimacy or illegitimacy of a ritual stems from its divine or satanic/demonic origin respectively, not from the contours of a particular gesture or spoken formula. In short, none of the Gospel writers stress in their retellings of the 'Beelzebul Controversy' the ritual aspects of Jesus' exorcisms.

53 E.g., the sixth-century CE *Life of Theodore of Sykeon* (37–38) depicts a showdown between a local 'sorcerer' named Theodotus and Theodore. On the implications of this story for understanding competing ritual experts in local contexts, see Frankfurter, "Beyond Magic and Superstition," 276–77.

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cross is made, μαγεία wastes away and φαρμακεία does not work."[54] I will treat φαρμακεία (here: an illicit ritual involving material substances) in more detail in the next section. For now, it is worth highlighting that, for Athanasius, the cross gesture not only constituted an appropriate substitution for rituals associated with μαγεία and φαρμακεία, but this Christian practice functioned as the antidote to them.[55] Subsequent lives of saints and monks, such as Jerome's *Life of Hilarion*,[56] followed Athanasius's immensely popular account of Antony in contrasting their heroes, who use approved gestures and rituals, with illicit specialists and their rituals.[57] It should be noted that, although Athanasius, Jerome, and some of their peers presented the rituals of their heroes as distinguishable from those of illicit practitioners, the ritual boundaries between holy men and their counterparts were much more ambiguous in other early Christian narratives and in social reality.[58]

54 *Vita Antoni*, 78.5 (SC 400:334); translation based on J. Wortley, "Some Light on Magic and Magicians in Late Antiquity," *GRBS* 42 (2001): 289–307. Cf. Athanasius, *de Incarnatio Verbi Dei* 47–48.

55 It is likely, therefore, that Athanasius had in mind the negative or harmful aspects of μαγεία and φαρμακεία—and not, for instance, their associations with healing. On the relationships between Antony's ritual use of scripture and biblical amulets, see J.E. Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits on Amulets from Late Antique Egypt: Text, Typology, and Theory* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 59; Arkadiy Avdokhin, *The Quest for Orthopraxy: Narrating and Negotiating Christian Prayers and Hymns in Late Antiquity* (PhD diss., King's College London, 2016), 221–54.

56 Jerome, *Vita Hilarionis*, 3.8, 8.8; 7.4, 9.3; 10.5, 8; 11.3–13; 12.1–9; 32.2 (cf. S. Trzcionka, *Magic and the Supernatural in Fourth-Century Syria* [London; New York: Routledge, 2007], 43–45, 88–91, 150–51. For the literary relationship between the vitae of Athanasius and Hilarion, see P. Leclerc, "Jérôme et le genre littéraire de la biographie monastique," in *Jérôme, Trois vies de moines* (*Paul, Malchus, Hilarion*), ed. E.M. Morales and P. Leclerc (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2007), 33–72 at 48–51.

57 On the influence of Antony's vita on subsequent hagiographical literature, see e.g., W. Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 97–100. On the power of the cross, see Cyril of Jerusalem, *Baptismal Instruction* 13.36, 40; Epiphanius, *Adversus Haereses*, 1.2.30.7. The cross was also believed to cause harm if used inappropriately (cf. Gregory the Great, *Dialogues* 1.4). On the relationship between saints' lives and 'magic,' see H.J. Magoulias, "The Lives of Byzantine Saints as Sources of Data for the History of Magic in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries A.D.: Sorcery, Relics and Icons," *Byzantion* 37 (1967): 228–69; M.W. Dickie, "Narrative-Patterns in Christian Hagiography," *GRBS* 40 (1999): 86–91.

58 D. Frankfurter, "The Perils of Love: Magic and Countermagic in Coptic Egypt," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10 (2001): 480–500 at 498. Cf. Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca*, 17.6–9 (*Historia Monachorum*, 21.17). On the lengths to which Athanasius and Jerome went to distinguish the rituals of holy men from those of illicit specialists, see de Bruyn, *Making Amulets Christian*, 31–32.

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Perhaps the clearest example of the later narrative development of illicit ritual is found in the contest between Simon Magus and Peter in the disparate traditions often called the *Apocryphal Acts of Peter* (*APt*).[59] One such tradition is preserved in a sixth or seventh-century CE Latin Manuscript (*Actus Vercellenses* [hereafter *Actus Ver.*]), which expands considerably the story of Simon—at least when compared to the canonical Acts of the Apostles.[60] Drawing on the conventions of the ancient novel[61] and on prior Christian traditions,[62] *Actus Ver.* includes a showdown between the Apostle Peter and Simon. This account not only details the numerous marvels accomplished by the protagonist and antagonist respectively, but also includes miracles wrought by unexpected characters, such as a talking dog (*Actus Ver.* 12) and a talking infant (*Actus Ver.* 15).[63] The showdown comes to an end when Simon flies over Rome, only to be brought crashing down though the prayers of Peter (*Actus Ver.* 32). Although Simon first only suffers a broken leg (albeit in three places), he eventually dies in Aricia (*Actus Ver.* 32).

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59 On the problem with envisioning a single text/tradition of the *APt*, see M.C. Baldwin, *Whose* Acts of *Peter? Text and Historical Context of the Actus Vercellenses* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 26–62.

60 R.A. Lipsius and M. Bonnet, eds. *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Hermann Mendessohn, 1891); Reprint, (New York: G. Olms, 1972), 1:45–103. Among the other relatively early traditions are a Greek fragment (P. Oxy. 849) and a Coptic fragment (P.Ber. 8502). For analyses of 'magic' and Simon Magus in the *APt/Actus Ver.*, see J.N. Bremmer, "Magic in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles," in *The Metamorphosis of Magic from Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period* (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 51–70; G.P. Luttikhuizen, "Simon Magus as a Narrative Figure in the Acts of Peter," in *The Apocryphal Acts of Peter: Magic, Miracles, and Gnosticism*, ed. J.N. Bremmer (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 39–51.

61 On the relationship between *APt/Actus Ver.* and ancient novels, see C. Thomas, *The Acts of Peter, Gospel Literature, and the Ancient Novel: Rewriting the Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

62 For instance, the redactor draws on the Acts of the Apostles in introducing Simon, relaying that Simon claims to be 'the great power of God' (*Actus Ver.* 4; cf. Acts 8:9–10). The reference to Simon flying (*APt* 32) is likewise attested in the Pseudo-Clementine literature (*Recognitions*, 2.9 [cf. 3.47, 57]) and in the *Didascalia* (6.7–9). For discussion, see Bremmer, "Apocryphal Acts," 64. The alleged statue "to Simon, the young god" (cf. *Actus Ver.* 10, Elliott 407) seems to reflect a similar tradition as Justin Martyr's curious reference to the Roman erection of a statue for 'the god Simon' (Justin, *1 Apologia,* 26). On the possibility that this tradition impacted the presentation of Simon in the *APt/Actus Ver.*, see Luttikhuizen, "Simon Magus," 41 n. 10. On the subsequent traditions of Simon more generally, see now Bremmer, "Narrating Witchcraft."

63 On the performance of miracles by animals in the *Actus Ver.*, see J. Spitler, *Animals in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: The Wild Kingdom of Early Christian Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 126–55.

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Like the canonical Acts of the Apostles, *Actus Ver.* portrays a caricature of Simon. While the latter is a quite fanciful text, the depiction of Simon offers insights into the development of a notion of (illicit) ritual in Christian literary imagination. For instance, although *magia* is not explicitly defined in *Actus Ver.*, this text reveals a complex understanding of the term. In contrast to Peter's powerful deeds, which are universally depicted as stemming from his connection to the true God,[64] Simon's deeds of *magia* are portrayed alternatively as 'real' (though demonic)[65] and fraudulent.[66]

In addition, by comparing the Simon narratives in *Actus Ver.* and in the canonical Acts of the Apostles we gain insight into developments in Christian ritual discourse. The scribe behind the *Actus Ver.* deploys a host of vocabulary to characterize the ritual activities of Simon, including: *magus* (e.g., *Actus Ver.* 5; 28); *magia* (e.g., *Actus Ver.* 17; 28); *magica arte* (e.g., *Actus Ver.* 17; 23); (*magico*) *carmine* (*Actus Ver*. 16; 17; 18); and *magica figmenta* (*Actus Ver.* 16). In contrast to the story in Acts, *magia* here also constitutes a key component in the narrative, playing a major role in shaping the evil of Simon's character. Beyond its key function in his miraculous confrontation with Peter, Simon's ritual expertise is explicitly connected to deception (*Actus Ver.* 24) and theft (*Actus Ver.* 17; 18) and reveals his demonic/satanic alliance (e.g., *Actus Ver.* 5; 17; 32). This latter demonic dimension also represents a key difference between the two accounts. In contrast to Acts—in which only μαντεύομαι is explicitly connected with demons—*Actus Ver.* notes that *magia* works through satanic/demonic agency (*Actus Ver.* 18). As we will see, the robust presentation of illicit ritual in *Actus Ver.* worked in dialogue with a growing interest in religious difference and the concomitant taxonomization of (illicit) ritual activity during late antiquity.

3.1.5 Illegitimate and Ambiguous Ritual and Early Christian Narratives: Conclusions

The narratives discussed in this section have disclosed significant shifts in the depictions of illicit and ambiguous ritual during the first centuries of Christianity. In the narratives from the formative period, the ritual characteristics of μαγεία and the like typically do not play major roles in the stories. Although these texts do not necessarily reveal the totality of their authors'

64 For instance, in *Actus Ver.* 26, Peter states that Jesus Christ performed 'great signs and wonders through me' (*et tanta signa et prodigia fasciens per me*).

65 E.g., *Actus Ver.* 32.

66 E.g., *Actus Ver.* 17.

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ideas on ritual, there does not seem to be any evidence that the New Testament writers had a clear sense of illegitimate ritual acts (as distinct from other undesirable traits and behaviors). The astrological methods of the exotic μάγοι, for instance, are not mentioned anywhere in the Matthean account. In Acts, the *tacit* activities of Simon, which result in ostentatious show, are simply glossed as μαγεία. In fact, μαντεύομαι in Acts 16:16–24 represents the sole case in which the illicitness of the *ritual* activity emerges as a manifest feature of a story. The redactor directly links the girl's mantic activities with spirit possession. Yet, even in this passage, the specific kind of ritual the girl performed remains a mystery. In Acts more generally, the rites, formulae, and gestures that support the domains of exorcism, healing, and preternatural spectacle were inherently ambiguous. Indeed, it is primarily the identity of the performer—especially his or her relation (or lack thereof) to the Jesus movement and its mores—that determines whether the rites, gestures, and formulae are positive or negative. Thus, when Paul performs an exorcism through a divine invocation, it is successful and worthy of praise; when the Sons of Sceva attempt a similar exorcism through divine invocation, it is unsuccessful and mocked in the text. In this regard, the specific exorcistic formula mentioned in the Sons of Sceva narrative is not framed as an illegitimate ritual *per se*, but merely supports the story's primary goal of distinguishing community insiders from outsiders (especially Jews).

To be sure, the following generations of narrators and scribes by no means processed these issues according to modern notions of magic or ritual. Consequently, many of their texts—just like in the Acts of the Apostles—presuppose considerable overlaps between the rites, gestures, and formulae of holy men and those of illicit ritual experts. What is more, illicit rituals in these narratives are typically not framed as ends in and of themselves, but tend to buttress a larger motif (e.g., the need to separate from heathens; the 'true' power of God). Yet some later Christian writers, such as the scribe behind the *Actus Ver.*, emphasized to a much greater degree the contrasts between legitimate and illegitimate rituals and ritual actors. Toward this end, these later writers not only assigned to ritual acts a more central role for character development, but they also established—or appropriated—robust vocabularies and taxonomies to support their preferred distinctions between licit and illicit rituals. Such writers thus embody a considerable shift in Christian notions of illegitimate ritual. As we will see, this development worked in dialogue with an expanding and imperially sanctioned Christian ritual culture during late antiquity that defined itself in contrast to a wide range of Others. I will now examine how these and other developments manifested in lists of inappropriate or ambiguous behaviors/rituals.

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3.2 *Lists and Catalogues*

It is not surprising that lists of sins and errors—a genre of moral discourse inherited from Jewish wisdom literature—were used by many followers of Jesus. The earliest lists found in the texts of the nascent Jesus movements included a wide range of wrongdoings that extended well beyond the domain of ritual. Over time, however, early Christian texts incorporated lists that increasingly specified illegitimate ritual practices and actors (e.g., μαγεία, ἐπαοιδός, μαθηματικός, and their cognates).[67] The list is thus a particularly useful site for tracing the evolution of Christian taxonomies and, consequently, conceptions of illicit ritual practice.[68]

3.2.1 The Spirit, The Flesh, and Illegitimate Ritual (Galatians 5:16–26)

The epistles of Paul contain the earliest extant sin lists of the Jesus movements. To be sure, Paul's choice of this form was not made in a vacuum: again, Paul's (im)moral lists were part of a much larger trend within the Hellenistic world that included Wisdom (Wis. 12:3–7) and the works of Philo of Alexandria (*De Cherubim*, 92).[69]

In his epistle to the Galatians, Paul stressed the need for community support, cooperation, and unity. As part of this motif, Paul drew his famous dichotomy between the spirit and the flesh (Gal. 5:16–26). He enumerated the various 'works of the flesh' (τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός), including in his list φαρμακεία ('sorcery' [NRSV]) and φθόνοι ('envy' [NRSV]). The other items in the works-of-the-flesh list include both concrete actions (e.g., 'fornication' [πορνεία]) and

67 Of course, as has been well documented, lists also played an important role in the ritual texts we identify with the category 'magic.' Indeed, lists of deities, ingredients, and even biblical passages pepper the texts of late antique *grimoires* and applied artifacts. On the importance of such lists in ostensibly 'magical' contexts, see R. Gordon, "'What's in a List?' Listing in Greek and Graeco–Roman Malign Magical Texts," in *The World of Ancient Magic: Papers from the First International Samson Eitrem Seminar at the Norwegian Institute at Athens, 4–8 May 1997*, ed. D.R. Jordan, H. Montgomery, and E. Thomassen (Bergen: The Norwegian Institute at Athens, 1999), 239–77.

68 This emphasis on early Christian taxonomies works in dialogue with research in the cognitive sciences, which has shown that attention to classification systems is essential for understanding the conception of a given idea (G. Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Human Mind* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987], 5–11). On the importance of lists and catalogues in early Christian heresiological classification, see G. Smith, *Guilt by Association: Heresy Catalogues in Early Christianity* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Berzon, *Classifying Christians*, 218–45.

69 For a convenient discussion of such vice (and virtue) lists, see H.D. Betz, *Galatians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 281–82.

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more abstract qualities (e.g., 'anger' [θυμοί]), which might eventually lead to ἔργα. What all the terms have in common—especially when we take into consideration Paul's broader social program in Galatians—are their harmful effects on individuals within the community and/or on the community at large.

Within the Greco-Roman world, φθόνος was a negative emotion that, in its most general sense, referred to the desire for a rival, a compatriot, or even a friend to be deprived of their valued possessions and fortune.[70] This wish for the downfall of others based on their goods and successes crossed the domains of individual psychology, interpersonal exchange, and social relations. In many contexts, however, φθόνος also involved gestures we might usefully call ritual. In particular, φθόνος was often thought in antiquity to manifest itself in the casting of the evil eye.[71] This link between φθόνος and the evil eye in the broader Greco-Roman world is worth considering in our analysis of Galatians since Paul has already used in Gal. 3:1 the verb βασκαίνω ('bewitch' [NRSV]), which formed part of the technical vocabulary of the evil-eye phenomenon.[72] Paul's acute knowledge of evil-eye language increases the probability that φθόνος in Gal. 5:20 and φθονοῦντες in Gal. 5:26 implied some sort of cursing activity that accompanied the evil eye. Within the context of Galatians, however, the problem with φθόνος, φθονοῦντες, and the resulting evil eye would not have been their demonic or magical associations. Instead, these ritual activities necessitated aggressive and counter-communal interactions between believers—akin to ἔρις ('strife' [NRSV]) and ἐριθεῖαι ('quarrels' [NRSV]) in Gal. 5:20—and thus constituted the antithesis of 'the fruits of the spirit' (cf. Gal. 5:22–24).

The term φαρμακεία—typically translated as 'sorcery'—was often used ambiguously (as here), thus providing the scholar with little evidence to interpret.[73] In the court of the Areopagus in Athens, φαρμακεία could denote a form of homicide, which roughly corresponds to our notion of poisoning.[74] But already in the Classical period φαρμακεία also acquired a ritual dimension,

70 On the cognitive, linguistic, and social dimensions of φθόνος in antiquity (with an emphasis on ancient Athens), see E. Eidinow, *Envy, Poison, and Death: Women on Trial in Ancient Athens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 71–163. See also J.H. Elliott, *Beware the Evil Eye: The Evil Eye in the Bible and the Ancient World*, 3 vols. (Eugene, OR: James Clark & Co., 2016), 2: 84.

71 Elliott, *Beware the Evil Eye*, 2:82–95. See also K.M.D. Dunbabin and M.W. Dickie, "Invidia Rumpantur Pectora: The Iconography of Phthonos/Invidia in Graeco-Roman Art," *JAC* 26 (1983) 7–37.

72 Elliott, *Beware the Evil Eye*, 3:212–64.

73 Pharr, "The Interdiction of Magic," 273.

74 Dickie, *Magic*, 54. Dickie speculates that, because of the dual meaning of φαρμακεία, practitioners might also have been punished.

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including the ritual use of material substances (something like 'potion'), and was, accordingly, juxtaposed with terms, such as ἐπωιδαί ('spells, charms').[75]

The fact that Paul probably referred to ritual impropriety vis-a-vis the φθόνος word group increases the likelihood that he emphasized the ritual dimensions of φαρμακεία here as well. What is more, an inscription from a private association in Philadelphia (first century BCE) juxtaposes 'φάρμακον πονηρόν' with 'ἐπωιδὰς πονηράς' ('malevolent charms') as part of a similar list of vices, including sexual misdeeds.[76] In short, the NRSV's translation of φαρμακεία as 'sorcery' might not be completely off the mark. But even if we ought to understand φαρμακεία as sorcery, the context again suggests that Paul's condemnation of this ritual practice for the Galatians would have been primarily oriented around its negative impact on the community.

3.2.2 Φαρμακεία and Φάρμακος in the Lists of Revelation

Scholars have long highlighted the presence of illicit ritual in the Book of Revelation.[77] While much of this scholarship has focused on the redactor's alleged utilization of such rituals, the parameters of this study demand that I restrict my analysis to the redactor's understanding of illegitimate ritual.[78] In particular, I focus my attention on the lists in Revelation in which φαρμακεία and φάρμακος occur.

As we have already seen, φαρμακεία could imply poisoning and/or illicit ritual activity involving material substances. The homicidal dimension of φαρμακεία is important for our present discussion because, as we will see, the redactor of Revelation consistently juxtaposes φαρμακεία/φάρμακος with terms for violence.

The terms φαρμακεία or φάρμακος occur in four passages in Revelation (Rev. 9:21; 18:23; 21:8; 22:15). In three of these passages the φαρμ-stem occurs in lists: Rev. 9:21 records that, in addition to participating in different forms

75 E.g., Plato, *Theaetetus* 149c–d.

76 For the translation and discussion of this inscription, see D. Aune, *Revelation: 17–22* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers, 1998), 1132.

77 E.g., Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," 1555; Hull, *Hellenistic Magic*, 144. For a recent discussion of the issues involved, see R.L. Thomas, *Magical Motifs in the Book of Revelation* (London: T&T Clark, 2010).

78 The imposition of contemporary notions of 'magic' onto this text have prompted some scholars to contend that there is a tension in the Book of Revelation. For instance, Thomas writes, "It is of note that the redactor of Revelation seems unequivocally opposed to φαρμακεία, and yet, he seems to embrace concepts and terms commonly associated with magic" (Thomas, *Magical Motifs*, 2–3).

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of idolatry,[79] the two thirds of humanity not killed by divine decree "did not repent of their murders (φόνων) nor of their sorceries (φαρμάκων) nor of their sexual sin (πορνείας) nor of their thefts (κλεμμάτων) (9:21);"[80] in Rev. 22:15, the redactor also places φάρμακοι in a similar list of deviants—including 'fornicators' (πόρνοι) and 'murderers' (φονεῖς) and 'idolaters' (εἰδωλολάτραι). Rev. 21:8 likewise places in sequence the φόνος, πόρνος, and φάρμακος as part of a more extensive list of deviants who will find a fiery end.

It is worth stressing that φαρμακεία/φάρμακος is consistently placed in these lists alongside πορνείας/πόρνοι and, perhaps more importantly, φόνος/φονεύς (9:21; 21:8; 22:15). The connection between φαρμακεία/φάρμακος and violent activity is further highlighted in Rev. 18:23–24. In this passage, an angel proclaims the destruction of Babylon/Rome (Rev. 18:22) and specifies the reason for its destruction: because "your [Babylon's] merchants were the great people (μεγιστᾶνες) of the earth, and all nations were deceived by your sorcery (ἐν τῇ φαρμακείᾳ σου). And in you was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slaughtered on earth (NRSV)." In addition to functioning as a kind of metaphor for the deceptive practices of 'Babylon' (Rev. 18:23), φαρμακεία is juxtaposed with language of violence; the final reason (i.e., the killing [σφάγω] of the prophets, saints, and others) is modified by the same ὅτι as the φαρμακεία clause, thus syntactically joining both reasons.[81] Although the lists we have discussed juxtapose φαρμακεία/φάρμακος with the noun φόνος/φονεύς, the verb σφάγω here likewise implies killing through violence.[82] It would seem, therefore, that the redactor draws a strong association between φαρμακεία/φάρμακος and violence.

The locations of φαρμακεία and φάρμακος within the rhetoric of Revelation make it clear that these terms refer to an illicit—and probably illegal—activity. In particular, each of the passages draws a connection between φαρμακεία/φάρμακος and violent bloodshed. At the same time, the list of similar vices—along with the juxtaposition of φαρμακεία and ἐπωιδὰς πονηράς—on the aforementioned inscription from Philadelphia (cf. Rev. 3:7) seems to increase

79 Rev. 9:20 lists "worshipping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk."

80 Rev. 9:13–21 describes the plagues delivered upon the earth when the sixth angel sounded his trumpet. This angel receives a divine message to release the four angles who are bound at the Euphrates, so that they kill a third of mankind (9:14–15). We learn that the remaining two-thirds were unrepentant and thus engaged in the various improper behaviors described in 9:20–21.

81 Both clauses are likewise introduced by the preposition ἐν with a nominal dative construction.

82 See Aune, *Revelation*, 1010–11.

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the likelihood that the redactor of Revelation also envisioned a ritual component to φαρμακεία. Accordingly, Revelation should perhaps serve as a caution against imposing onto antiquity a strict distinction between the legal and ritual dimensions of φαρμακεία/φάρμακος.[83] This ritual aspect notwithstanding, it is worth highlighting that Revelation—like Galatians—situates φαρμακεία within a list of iniquities, neither specifying its performative aspects nor advancing an explicit connection between φαρμακεία and demons.

The tradition of listing sins, including the accumulation of illicit ritual practices, shifted considerably in the subsequent traditions of Jesus' followers (even traditions shortly after Galatians and Revelation). Such developments—which of course unfolded unevenly across time and space—worked in concert with several macro-level changes to the emerging Christian movements, including the appropriation of new genres, different concerns related to the increasing structure of ecclesial institutions, and the imperial sponsoring of Christianity. This emphasis on classifying others and their practices was not limited to illegitimate ritual practices but encompassed many areas of late antique culture.[84]

3.2.3 The Ritual Lists in the Two-Ways Tradition

Lists of illegitimate ritual, which differ considerably from the lists in Galatians and Revelation, are found in the *Didache* (*Did.*). This text, redacted around the turn of the second century CE, engages with illicit ritual as part of its appropriation of the widespread 'Two Ways' tradition (cf. *Did.* 1–6:2). Although this tradition had parallels with ethical teachings throughout the ancient Mediterranean world (e.g., Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, II.1.21–34), it was particularly prominent among the various Jewish communities of antiquity.[85] The final redactor of the *Didache* participated in this Jewish tradition, although he augmented it using language drawn from the early Jesus movements.[86] Thus,

83 On the problems with drawing hard-and-fast distinctions between poison and magic potion (cf. *veneficium*; φαρμακεία) as it pertains to ancient Roman law, see J.B. Rives, "Magic in Roman Law: The Reconstruction of a Crime," *Classical Antiquity* 22 (2003) 313–39 at 319–20.

84 A. Cameron, "Ascetic Closure and the End of Antiquity," in *Asceticism*, ed. V.L. Wimbush and R. Valantasis (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 147–61, esp. 156; Berzon, *Classifying Christians*.

85 E.g., 1QS 3:13–4:26; Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus*, IV. 108; Philo, *De Confusione Linguarum*, 117. On the relationship between the *Didache* and the Jewish Two-Ways tradition, see R.A. Kraft, *The Apostolic Fathers, vol. 3: Barnabas and the Didache* (Toronto: T. Nelson Publishers, 1965); and H. Van de Sandt and D. Flusser, *The Didache: Its Jewish Sources and its Place in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 140–90.

86 On the relatively limited 'Christian' vocabulary in *Did.* 1–6:2, see Van de Sandt and Flusser, *The Didache*, 57. For the identification of this material with the early Jesus movement, see

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one finds in *Did.* 1:3b–2:1 various expressions reminiscent of statements of Jesus from the synoptic Gospels.[87]

The *Didache* includes the prohibitions οὐ μαγεύσεις and οὐ φαρμακεύσεις in immediate succession as part of an extensive list of sinful activities that are grouped under the rubric 'the second commandment of the teaching' (δευτέρα δὲ ἐντολὴ τῆς διδαχῆς) (*Did.* 2:1). The close proximity of these prohibitions seems to imply that their ritual contours were prominent. That the redactor was concerned with ritual practice is evident in *Did.* 3:4, where we find a command not to be an οἰωνοσκόπος ('a diviner')—as it leads to εἰδωλολατρίαν ('idolatry')—followed by a polysyndetonic list (with μηδέ) that condemns the ἐπαοιδός ('the one who performs incantations'), the μαθηματικός ('the astrologer'), and the participants in περικαθαίρων ('rites of purification').[88] It is possible that this sequence reflects contemporary Roman imperial discourse. Indeed, already in early imperial legislation, lexemes, such as *ars maleficia* and *superstitio*, were linked with *inter alia* illicit predictive and prophetic rites.[89] At the very least, however, the redactor has clearly understood all of the practices behind these titles as falling under some broader category, which we might tentatively deem 'illicit ritual.' The isolation of these illegitimate rituals into a single section represents an important development; however, it is also worth noting that this list is part of a larger section (*Did.* 3:1–10) devoted to various evils (cf. πονηρός), including lists prohibiting ὀργή ('anger'), ἐπιθυμία ([sexual] 'desire'), and ψεῦσμα ('lying'). The seriatim grouping of illegitimate ritual practices under a larger category of inappropriate behaviors is likewise reflected in *Did.* 5:1, in which μαγεῖαι and φαρμακίαι occur in immediate succession alongside a litany of other sins—including φόνοι ('murders') and μοιχεῖαι ('adulteries'). The sins in this case are classified under the rubric 'the way of death' (ἡ τοῦ θανάτου ὁδός).

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e.g., K. Niederwimmer, *The Didache: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1988) 65–66. On the redactional layers of the *Didache*, see Kraft, *Apostolic Fathers*, 59–65.

87 E.g., *Did.* 1:2 (e.g., Matt. 22:37; Matt. 7:12); *Did.* 1:3 (e.g., Luke 6:28; Matt. 5:44–57); *Did.* 1:4 (Matt. 5:39). These correspondences with the synoptic Gospels, however, probably do not reflect direct 'influence' or 'dependence' (see, for instance, H. Koester, *Synoptische Uberlieferung bei den apostolischen Vätern* [Tübingen: Akademie-Verlag, 1957], 172; Niederwimmer, *The Didache*, 64).

88 The translations of the *Didache* are taken from B. Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers*, 2 vols, Loeb Classical Library 24–25 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 1:421. On the problems with περικαθαίρων here, see W.L. Knox, "ΠΕΡΙΚΑΘΑΙΡΩΝ (Didache iii 4)," *JTS* 40 (1939): 146–49.

89 M. Salzman, "*Superstitio* in the *Codex Theodosianus* and the Persecution of Pagans," *VC* 41 (1987): 172–88 at 175; Rives, "Magic in Roman Law," 332.

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The extant text of the *Didache* captures an important perspective on illicit ritual among certain second-century adherents to the Jesus movement. This text not only includes μαγεία in lists of inappropriate behaviors, but it also links φαρμακεία and μαγεία (*Did.* 2:1; 5:1) as well as other ritual practices (cf. *Did.* 3:4) under individual rubrics ('the second commandment of the teaching' and 'the way of death'). The *Didache*, which might in fact predate the less ritually oriented Acts of the Apostles, represents one line of early Christian discourse in which inappropriate rituals were beginning to be classified as a unit.[90]

Other early Christian texts that incorporated the Two Ways tradition likewise reflect this trend of linking illegitimate ritual practices.[91] The extant redaction of the *Epistle of Barnabas*, edited by a Jesus follower perhaps as early as the first half of the second century CE, places φαρμακεία and μαγεία in immediate succession in an extensive list of sins under the rubric 'the way of the black one' (ἡ τοῦ μέλανος ὁδός) (*Ep. Barn.* 20:1–8).[92] The Latin version of the *Doctrina apostolorum* prohibits under the same breath the practicing of *magica*[93] and *medicamenta mala* (*Doct. apost.* 2:2) and then tells believers to avoid the *mathematicus* and the *delustrator*, who lead one to *vanam superstitionem* (*Doct. apost.*, 3.4).[94] The so-called *Apostolic Tradition*, a collection of community rules that date at the latest to the fourth century CE,[95] is first preserved in a Coptic manuscript dating to ca. 500 CE.[96] In this manuscript, we find a list of ritual practitioners who ought to be excluded from baptism if they fail to cease their activities: e.g., the ⲙⲁⲅⲟⲥ (μάγος), the ⲁⲥⲧⲣⲟⲗⲟⲅⲟⲥ (ἀστρόλογος),

90 For the later dating of Acts, see e.g., the various essays in D.E. Smith and J.B. Tyson, eds., *Acts and Christian Beginnings: The Acts Seminar Report* (Salem, OR: Polebridge Press, 2013). This situation ought to remind us again that developments do not take place evenly across time and space.

91 On the relationships between these texts and the *Didache*, see Niederwimmer, *The Didache*, 30–41.

92 Cf. *Testament of Reuben* 7. For the early dating of the Epistle of Barnabas, see Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers*, 2:6–7. On its redactional layers, see, for instance, Kraft, *Apostolic Fathers*, 1–21.

93 So reads ms. F. of the *Docrina apostolorum.* Ms. M of this text reads 'non mag<ica?> facies.' For an analysis of the latter reading, see K. Niederwimmer, "Doctrina apostolorum (Cod. Mellic. 597)," in *Theologia scientia eminens practica; F. Zerbst zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. H.C. Schmidt-Lauber (Vienna: Herder, 1979), 266–72 at 271.

94 See also *Apostolic Church Order* 10, ed. A. Stewart-Sykes, *The Apostolic Church Order: The Greek Text with Introduction, Translation and Annotation* (Strathfield, NSW: St. Paul's Publications, 2006), 94; *Epitome* (Stewart-Sykes, *Apostolic Church Order*, 117).

95 P. Bradshaw, M.E. Johnson, and L.E. Phillips, *Apostolic Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 7–8, 13–15.

96 W. Till and J. Leipoldt, ed. *Der koptische Text der Kirchenordnung Hippolyts* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1954), 12.

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the ⲣⲉϥϣⲓⲛⲉ (something like a 'fortune teller'), ⲡⲉⲧⲃⲱⲗ ⲛ̄ϩⲉⲛⲣⲁⲥⲟⲩ ('the one who interprets dreams'), and ⲡⲉⲧⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟ ⲛ̄ϩⲉⲛⲫⲩⲗⲁⲕⲧⲏⲣⲓⲟⲛ ('the one who makes φυλακτήρια [see below]') (*Traditio apostolorum*, 16.14).[97] The illicit ritual dimensions associated with the ⲣⲉϥϣⲓⲛⲉ are evident in *Pistis Sophia*. This text tells us that the ⲣⲉϥϣⲓⲛⲉ are able to acquire accurate knowledge about the future from the deacons "when they *call upon* the name of the *archons* and *meet* them looking to the left" (ⲉⲩϣⲁⲛⲉⲡⲓⲕⲁⲗⲓ ⲙ̄ⲡⲣⲁⲛ ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲁⲣⲭⲱⲛ ⲛⲥⲉⲁⲡⲁⲛⲧⲁ ⲉⲣⲟⲟⲩ ⲉⲩⲥⲱϣⲧ̄ ⲉϩⲃⲟⲩⲣ).[98]

3.2.4 Ecclesiastical Canons

Closely overlapping with the materials in the *Doctrina apostolorum* and the *Apostolic Tradition* were the roughly contemporaneous lists in ecclesiastical canons that condemned various ritual practices.[99] One of the Coptic canons of Pseudo-Athanasius, which likely dates between 350–500 CE, commands congregants to avoid the ⲣⲉϥⲕⲁⲟⲩⲛⲟⲩ,[100] the ⲣⲉϥⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ, the ⲣⲉϥϣⲓⲛⲉ, and the ⲙⲁⲅⲟⲥ or else suffer exclusion from the Eucharist for three years.[101] Another canon from this collection warns clergy (ⲕⲗⲏⲣⲓⲕⲟⲥ) not to possess books (ⲛ̀ϫⲱⲱⲙⲉ) of ⲙⲁⲅⲓⲁ (μαγεία).[102] Contrary to the ambiguous reference to 'books' associated with περίεργα in Acts 19:19, the use of the label ⲙⲁⲅⲓⲁ as well as the canon's relatively late date and its provenance in Egypt make it conceivable that the

97 Till and Leipoldt, *Kirchenordnung Hippolyts*, 12. This tradition of prohibiting practitioners of illicit rituals from participating in baptism and catechesis was relatively widespread in late antique and early medieval Christianity. The so-called eighth book of the Apostolic Constitutions—a Syriac work dated to ca. 380 CE—requires a lengthy period of testing for a wide range of ritual practitioners (*Apostolic Constitutions*, 8.32.11; SC 336: 238). Likewise, the so-called *Canons of Hippolytus*, whose Egyptian author was greatly influenced by the *Apostolic Tradition*, forbids a similar list of practitioners from participating in catechesis and baptism until they cease their behavior—which must be confirmed by three witnesses (*Canon paschalis*, 15). For discussion of these sources, see de Bruyn, *Making Amulets Christian*, 36–37.

98 Text and translation taken from *Pistis Sophia*, ed. C. Schmidt and trans. V. MacDermot (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978), 30–31 (emphasis in original). For a discussion of this passage, see K. Dosoo, *Rituals of Apparition in the Theban Magical Library* (PhD diss., Macquarie University, 2014), 255.

99 E.g., Council of Ancyra, Canon 24; Basil of Caesarea, Canon 65. Cf. Basil of Caesarea, Canons 7, 8, 72, 83; Gregory of Nyssa, Canon 3.

100 As Dosoo notes, the ⲣⲉϥϣⲓⲛⲉ is contrasted in *Pistis Sophia* with the ⲣⲉϥⲕⲁⲟⲩⲛⲟⲩ, who makes predictions through calculations (*Rituals of Apparition*, 255).

101 Pseudo-Athanasius, Canon 41. See also Pseudo-Athanasius, Canons 25, 71, and 72. For the Arabic and Coptic texts and English translations of these canons, see *The Canons of Athanasius of Alexandria*, ed. and trans. W. Riedel and W.E. Crum (London: Williams and Norgate, 1904). On the date, see Riedel and Crum, *Canons*, xiv.

102 Pseudo-Athanasius, Canon 71.

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author imagined *grimoires* like those among the Greek Magical Papyri.[103] A Phrygian canon (ca. IV/V CE), which has been falsely attributed to a single Council of Laodicea, prohibits local clericals from functioning as ritual experts and congregants from using ritual objects.[104] The text reads, "They who are of the priesthood (ἱερατικούς), or of the clergy (κληρικούς), shall not be μάγους, ἐπαοιδούς, μαθηματικούς, or ἀστρολόγους; nor shall they make what are called φυλακτήρια, which are chains for their own souls. And those who wear such (chains), we command to be cast out of the Church."[105] This text goes beyond the canon of Pseudo-Athanasius in calling for the (permanent?) excommunication of users of φυλακτήρια—suspended ritual objects typically associated in the material record with the positive functions of healing and protection from demons.[106]

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103 See below, Dieleman, Chapter 13 and Van der Vliet, Chapter 14, and further on authorship such manuals: R.K. Ritner, "Egyptian Magical Practice under the Roman Empire," in *ANRW*, II. 18.5, ed. W. Haase (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1995), 3333–79; J. Dieleman, *Priests, Tongues, and Rites: The London-Leiden Magical Manuscripts and Translation in Egyptian Ritual (100–300 CE)*, RGRW 153 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2005), 185–284; D. Frankfurter, "Ritual Expertise in Roman Egypt and the Problem of the Category 'Magician,'" in *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, ed. P. Schäfer and H.G. Kippenberg (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), 115–35.

104 On this collection of Phrygian canons, probably assembled in the late-fourth or early-fifth century CE, see P.-P. Joannou, *Discipline génerale antique* (*IV^e–IX^e s.*), vol. 1, *Les canons des synodes particuliers* (Vatican: Tipografia Italo-Orientale 'S. Nilo', 1962) 127–28; de Bruyn, *Making Amulets Christian*, 39.

105 Canon 36. The above translation follows the general structure of H.R. Percival (in *npnf* 2–14); however, I have removed the glosses used to translate μάγους, ἐπαοιδούς, and the like. Cf. Canon 36 of the seventh-century CE Council of Trullo; John Moschus, *Pratum spirituale*, 146. The importance placed in this canon—and in the canon of Pseudo-Athanasius—on ritual experts devoted to acquiring knowledge (e.g., ρεγκαογνιογ, μαθηματικός, and ἀστρολόγος) might reflect growing concerns within Christian discourse that diviners undermined a single Christocentric cosmos: e.g., P. Athanassiadi, Philosophers and Oracles: Shifts of Authority in Late Paganism, *Byzantion* 62 (1992): 45–62; N. Denzey Lewis, "A New Star on the Horizon: Astral Christologies and Stellar Debates in Early Christian Discourse," in *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World*, ed. S. Noegel, J. Walker, and B. Wheeler (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 207–22. Indeed, late antiquity witnessed the proliferation of new forms of divination, including those associated with Christian characters and sites: David Frankfurter, "Voices, Books, and Dreams: The Diversification of Divination Media in Late Antique Egypt," in *Mantikê: Studies in Ancient Divination*, RGRW 155, ed. S.I. Johnston and P.T. Struck (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2005), 233–55. That the 'Council of Laodicea' implies that clergy were functioning as diviners might be particularly significant; the threat to the Christian cosmology would indeed increase if the very local representatives of ecclesiastical discourse promoted contrasting cosmological systems with that of imperially sponsored Christianity.

106 The term φυλακτήριον is used as a native term on several amulets for healing and protection (e.g., P. Haun. III 51; P. Heid. inv. G 1386; P. Köln inv. 851).

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These canons give weight to the historical proposition that many of the extant amulets and other applied ritual objects from late antiquity were made by ecclesiastical functionaries.[107] But they also offer precious information about late antique taxonomies of ritual practice. Like the *Didache*, these canons clearly connect the term μάγος to other categories of illicit ritual practitioners. Yet these lists are *exclusively* devoted to ritual practices and specialists and, consequently, the rituals are not juxtaposed with abstract or non-ritual 'moral' qualities in any observable way. Illicit rituals and experts emerge from these canons as a discrete area of concern that necessitates specific punishments and disciplinary actions (e.g., penance for three years and even excommunication).[108] In short, we can see in these canons nascent understandings of our concept 'ritual,' especially in its negative sense. Indeed, all of the categories of ritual specialization are gathered in these canons as if under a specific rubric, which we might imagine to be 'illicit specialists and their rituals.'[109]

3.2.5 Catalogues of Illegitimate Rituals and Imperial Law

These canons were not alone in their isolation of ritual behavior. Late antique legal experts likewise compiled laws specifically devoted to forbidden rituals and offenders of those rituals. James Rives has shown that Roman imperial legislation increasingly emphasized deviant ritual practices, including but not limited to those that caused harm.[110] It is not surprising, therefore, that

107 Caesarius, *Sermo*, 50; cf. *Vita S. Eligii Episcopi Noviomensis*. For discussion, see e.g., Stander, "Amulets," 61. For other kinds of ritual experts, see Athanasius, *De amuletis*; Athanasius, *Syntagma ad Monachos*, 2 (Cod. Vossianus gr. in fol. N. 46). Cf. Chrysostom, *De Chananaea*. For scholarly discussion, see e.g., D. Frankfurter, "Dynamics of Ritual Expertise in Antiquity and Beyond: Towards a New Taxonomy of 'Magicians,'" in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, RGRW 141, ed. P.A. Mirecki and M.W. Meyer (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), 159–78.

108 That ritual expertise constituted an independent question in its original context—not to mention in its subsequent reception—holds true whether the extant wording of this canon reflects the actual language of the Phrygian canonical tradition or merely a subsequent summary (*résumé*) of that tradition (cf. Joannou, *Discipline*, 128).

109 The received title of the 'Laodicean' canon (περὶ τῶν ἐπῳδαῖς ἢ φυλακτηρίοις χρωμένων [Latin: *de his qui incantatoribus et philacteriis, id est ligaturis, utuntur*]) almost certainly represents a subsequent traditional layer to the extant wording of the canon itself; the sole focus on usage in the title stands in marked contrast to the language of the canon, which places considerable emphasis on the clericals who were functioning as ritual experts (cf. Joannou, *Discipline*, 128).

110 Rives, "Magic in Roman Law." In this vein, it is likely that the Christian emperors were not simply following Christian theological writings, but were also following legal precedent (see I. Sandwell, "Outlawing 'Magic' or Outlawing 'Religion'? Libanius and the Theodosian

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the mid-fourth century CE witnessed a surprising number of accusations and trials of individuals on charges of illicit ritual activity.[111] Following this legal precedent, the fifth-century CE *Theodosian Code* (*CTh*) included prohibitions against deviant ritual activities and actors (often denoted *malefici*). The section on *malefici* (*De maleficis et mathematicis et ceteris similibus* [*CTh* 9.16]) occurs within the *Theodosian Code* as part of legislation against criminal activity.[112] Of particular significance for our present concerns are the kinds of ritual practices included and excluded within this rubric, thus providing insight into the operative taxonomies of illicit ritual practices among its fifth-century CE compilers. In addition to *malefici* (and cognates),[113] *mathematici*,[114] *magi* (and cognates),[115] we find *haruspices*,[116] those who invoke *daemones*,[117] *harioli*,[118] and *augures* (and cognates).[119] Another law outside of section 9.16 forbids several ritual practices (e.g., sacrificing in public or private shrines, burning incense, and worshipping images) that would have simply reflected traditional

Code as Evidence for Legislation against 'Pagan' Practices," in *The Spread of Christianity in the First Four Centuries: Essays in Explanation*, ed. W.V. Harris (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2005), 87–123 at 88).

111 P. Brown, "Sorcery, Demons, and the Rise of Christianity from Late Antiquity into the Middle Ages," in *Witchcraft, Confessions and Accusations*, ed. M. Douglas (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970), 17–45; A. Lotz, *Der Magiekonflikt in der Spätantike* (Bonn: Habelt, 2005); Dickie, *Magic*, 251–57; Trzcionka, *Magic and the Supernatural*, 63–80. Ammianus Marcellinus lists several ritual practices that would lead to capital punishment (*Res Gestae*, 19.12.14).

112 The Latin title for this section is typically translated along the lines of 'Concerning Magicians, Astrologers, and the like.' As J. Matthews has argued, one must pay close attention to how the compilers put together the *CTh* (J. F. Matthews, *Laying Down the Law: A Study of the Theodosian Code* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000], 12). Isabella Sandwell thus reasonably concludes that the placement of *malefici* within this part of the *CTh* suggests that the compilers were returning to an earlier classificatory scheme in which 'magic' was associated with criminal activity, especially murder (Sandwell, "Outlawing 'Magic,'" 95).

113 *CTh*. 9.16.3 (=brev.9.13.1), 317/19; 9.16.4 (=brev.9.13.2); 9.16.6, 358; 9.16.9, 371; 9.16.10, 371; 9.16.11, 389. Unless otherwise stated, the dates for these laws have been taken from O.F. Robinson, *Penal Practice and Penal Policy in Ancient Rome* (London: Routledge, 2007), 130–57.

114 *CTh*. 9.16.4 (=brev. 9.13.2), 357; 9.16.6, 358; 9.16.8, 370/73; 9.16.12, 409.

115 *CTh.* 9.16.4 (=brev. 9.13.2), 357; 9.16.6, 358; 9.16.6, 358. *Magicae artes*: 9.16.3 (=brev. 9.13.1), 318 (cf. Lotz, *Der Magiekonflikt*, 138 n. 439); 9.16.5, 357.

116 *CTh*. 9.16.1, 319; 9.16.4, 357; 9.16.6, 358.

117 *CTh*. 9.16.3, 318; 9.16.4, 357; 9.16.7 (=brev. 9.13.3), 364.

118 *CTh*. 9.16.4, 357; 9.16.6, 358.

119 *CTh*. 9.16.6, 358; 9.16.4, 357; 9.16.4, 357.

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Roman religion.[120] The emphasis in imperial law on predictive and prophetic rites and experts probably reflects growing concerns about political sedition associated with unsanctioned rituals of arcane knowledge.[121] Accordingly, some laws were particularly concerned with private and clandestine rituals, especially those done at night.[122] Such activities were among those warranting capital punishment (*capite puniatur*).[123]

Even though many of the laws in the *CTh* date back to earlier periods of the empire, it is worth stressing again that the compilation, structure, and ordering of the *CTh* was a product of the early fifth century CE. It is interesting, therefore, that there is a key difference between the taxonomy promoted in the *CTh* and that in the roughly contemporaneous 'Laodicean' canon. Despite the general emphasis on ritual deviance—and a law of Constantius, which refers to *magi* as 'enemies of the human race' (*humani generis inimici*)[124]—the *CTh* allows for rites that benefit people in areas, such as health and harvest.[125] By contrast, the canon condemns the making and use of φυλακτήρια, typically associated with healing and protection from demons, even to the point of excommunication. The differences between these two texts might have been occasioned in part from the respective interests of emperors and ecclesiastical leaders—a distinction also reflected in late antique battles between church and state over the proper treatment of the Jews.[126] Yet, as we will see in the next section, not all differences of opinion can be attributed to the emperor–ecclesiarch divide; church leaders disagreed among themselves about the boundaries of appropriate and inappropriate ritual activity, including the manufacturing and use of φυλακτήρια.

120 *CTh*. 16.10.12. Sandwell, "Outlawing 'Magic,'" 97. Cf. 9.16.6, 358. On the tendency among Christian emperors beginning in the fourth century CE to apply the label *superstitio* to local customs or 'paganism,' see Salzman, *Superstitio* in the *Codex Theodosianus*.

121 E.g., Trzcionka, *Magic and the Supernatural*, 74; Potter, *Prophets and Emperors*; M.T. Fögen, *Die Enteignung der Wahrsager* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1993), 160–62.

122 *CTh*. 9.16.7, 364. On the significance of secrecy and nocturnal rites on the prosecution of Apuleius, see H.G. Kippenberg, "Magic in Roman Civil Discourse: Why Rituals Could be Illegal," in *Envisioning Magic*, 137–63 at 151–52.

123 *CTh*. 9.16.7, 364; cf. 9.16.4, 357.

124 *CTh*. 9.16.6, 358.

125 *CTh.* 9.16.3, 318.

126 J.E. Sanzo and R. Boustan, "Jewish Culture and Society in a Christianizing Empire," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Attila*, ed. M. Maas (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 358–75.

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3.2.6 Lists and Illicit Rituals: Conclusions

Attention to the occurrences of μαγεία, φαρμακεία, and other categories of ritual practice on lists and related genres has allowed us to observe a development in the early Christian depictions—and conceptions—of (illicit) ritual. In the earliest strata of the extant evidence, followers of Jesus—like other Jews—framed illicit ritual practices, if at all, under general rubrics (e.g., 'the works of the flesh') and, accordingly, lumped them together with more abstract qualities and with other activities we would not identify with magic or illicit ritual (e.g., murder and fornication). In the New Testament, it is the φαρμακεία word group (and allusions to the 'evil eye')—not μαγεία—that dominates these early lists of inappropriate behaviors or qualities. The *Didache* represents the first extant text of the burgeoning Jesus movement (1) to include μαγεία in a list of sins, (2) to link explicitly μαγεία and φαρμακεία as related (ritual) practices, and (3) to devote a short section to illicit ritual actors. Yet, even in the *Didache*, these illicit practices and actors occur within larger textual units not limited to rituals. As time passed, however, inappropriate ritual and its experts developed into a category of its own on lists. This process culminated in late antiquity with ecclesiastical canons devoted exclusively to deviant ritual actors and their practices and with a clearly demarcated section of imperial law explicitly organized around illicit ritual activities. In the final part of this chapter, we will detail how the developments in illegitimate ritual, evident in Christian narratives and lists, played out in various domains of Christian life and discourse.

4 Illegitimate and Ambiguous Rituals: Discursive Contexts

Depictions of and references to μαγεία, φαρμακεία, and γοητεία *inter alia* figured into diverse literary and social contexts throughout late antiquity. Discussions of ritual were inextricably linked to conflicts, assimilations, and accommodations among and between the emergent Christian movements and their Mediterranean contexts. Many early Christian authors mapped onto their immediate environments (fictive) temptations and threats. Illegitimate rituals—especially those associated with terms, such as μαγεία and φαρμακεία—constituted one such menacing domain. This section sketches some of the most important ways discourses of illegitimate ritual figured into early Christian social and ritual life. As we will see, early Christian writers used slanderous tropes, such as demonic association and foolishness, to describe illegitimate rituals and their actors. At the same time, however, illegitimate rituals themselves—with those negative connotations attached—often

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functioned as lenses through which various others could be seen, classified, and maligned.

4.1 *Illegitimate Ritual, Slander, and Demons*

We have already seen how the *Didache* and *Ep. Barn.* rejected μαγεία and φαρμακεία. It is possible that Ignatius of Antioch, perhaps writing in the second century CE, also denounced the ritual dimensions of μαγεία.[127] He notes that the incarnation of Christ vanquished (ἐλύετο) all μαγεία and every 'δεσμὸς … κακίας' (literally 'bondage of evil').[128] The close proximity of μαγεία to the phrase δεσμὸς … κακίας might suggest that the latter phrase referred to binding rituals and related objects, which were common throughout the ancient Mediterranean world.[129] In either case, a triumphal posture over illegitimate ritual was not the only way such vocabulary penetrated early Christian texts.

Early followers of Jesus also deployed language associated with ritual practice in order to frame certain activities and actors as inappropriate. The *Epistle to Diognetus*, for instance, calls the speculations of philosophers on the nature of God πλάνη τῶν γοήτων.[130] The text places this philosophical deception in stark opposition to the revelation of God through faith (διὰ πίστεως).[131] The pseudepigraphical epistle 2 Timothy gestures toward ancient ritual antagonists (2 Tim. 3:8) as part of its condemnation of behaviors (e.g., greed, disobedience, lacking self-control) associated with troublemakers (2 Tim. 3:1–8). The text refers to Jannes and Jambres—who correspond to the wizards in Pharaoh's court opposing Moses (cf. Ex. 7:11, 22)—in order to provide a historical analogue

127 On the dating of the Ignatian letters, see e.g., W. Schmithals, "Zu Ignatius von Antiochien" *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 13 (2009): 181–203.

128 Ignatius, *Ephesians*, 19.3. Cf. Ignatius, *Polycarp*, 5.1. The literal translation 'bondage of evil' comes from B. Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers*, 1:239.

129 The δεσμ– stem was often connected to binding rituals. For this reason, Thee translates the phrase as 'spell' (*Julius Africanus*, 317–18). On binding spells and other imprecatory objects, see J.G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

130 *Epistle to Diognetus*, 8.4. Passing references to such vocabulary can be found in other texts of the 'Apostolic Fathers.' For instance, both Ignatius (*Trallians*, 6.2) and the author of the *Shepherd of Hermas* (17.7 [Vis. 3.9.7]) discuss the use of φάρμακα, though it is unclear the extent to which they highlight ritual. The *Shepherd of Hermas* agrees with the Acts of the Apostles in linking mantic specialists with demonic activity. The author notes that the devil fills the spirit of the mantic practitioner (cf. μαντεύομαι), providing that specialist with his ritual abilities (*Shep. Herm.* 43 [Man. 11.4, 17]).

131 *Epistle to Diognetus*, 8.5–6.

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for this contemporary group of men who captivate (cf. the verb αἰχμαλωτίζω) 'weak women' (γυναικάρια).[132] 2 Timothy also refers to γόητες (2 Tim. 3:13), pairing these actors with other 'evil men' (πονηροὶ ἄνθρωποι) who deceive (cf. the verb πλανάω).[133] These writers did not emphasize ritual activity *per se*, but aligned individuals/behaviors they deemed inappropriate with (fraudulent) ritual performers and language of deception.

Often the perceived threats associated with illicit rituals extended beyond the activities of humans. As we have seen, the New Testament writings only explicitly connected demons with mantic activity (μαντεύομαι; Acts 16:16–24). Yet, evil spirits quickly became one of the principle discursive registers through which Christians understood and described various Jewish and heathen rituals and their practitioners.[134] This demonic discourse no doubt worked in dialogue with the growing late antique belief that cities were teeming with malicious spirits.[135] Already in his *First Apology*—which dates to approximately the mid-second century CE—Justin Martyr identifies 'μαγικῶν στροφῶν' as a practice of δαίμονες.[136] Tertullian of Carthage linked illegitimate ritual practice with evil otherworldly agents through a fictive genealogy, tracing the ritual use of material substances—along with *incantationes*—back to the *nephilim*.[137] This theme remained prominent throughout post-New Testament Christian antiq-

132 Although the Exodus narrative remains silent on the identities of the 'sorcerers' and 'magicians' who opposed Moses (MT: *mekhashfim* and *hartumim*; LXX: φαρμακούς and ἐπαοιδοί), at least the name Jannes was already known to the author of the Damascus Document (1QS III.20), Pliny the Elder (*Natural History*, 30.2.11), Numenius of Apamea (*On the Good* 3 F9), and Apuleius (*Apologia*, 90). With the exception of the Damascus Document, each of the other authors refers to them or to their deeds with the μαγ-/*mag*-word group. On the origin and reception history of the characters Jannes and Jambres, see A. Pietersma, *The Apocryphon of Jannes and Jambres the Magicians: P. Chester Beatty XVI* (*with New Editions of Papyrus Vindobonensis Greek inv. 29456 + 29828 verso and British Library Cotton Tiberius B. v f. 87*), RGRW 119 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 3–71.

133 On the meaning of γόητος and its cognates, see Graf, *Magic*, 24–28.

134 V. Flint, "The Demonisation of Magic and Sorcery in Late Antiquity: Christian Redefinitions of Pagan Religions," in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe*, 277–348. On the demonization of ritual more generally, see J.Z. Smith, "Towards Interpreting Demonic Powers in Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity," in *ANRW* II.16.1, ed. W. Haase (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1978), 254–394.

135 D. Kalleres, *City of Demons: Violence, Ritual, and Christian Power in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 4–6.

136 Justin Martyr, *1 Apologia*, 14:1–3; 26.2, 4; 56.1; *2 Apologia*, 5. Aristides connects the Greek gods with φαρμακεία/φάρμακοι (*Apologia*, 8.3; 13.7) and even refers to Hermes as a μάγος (*Apologia*, 10.3).

137 Tertullian, *De cultu feminarum*, 1.2.1, 2.10.2–3. Cf. Tertullian, *De anima*, 57.1; Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos*, 1; Justin Martyr, *2 Apologia*, 5[4].2–4; *Recognitions* 1.30.2–3; 4.27; 9.25; Cassian, *Conf.* 8.21. On the origin of illicit practices and knowledge in the teachings of fallen angels see above, Harari, Chapter 8.

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uity. In addition to relatively early writers, such as Justin Martyr and Tertullian, Arnobius of Sicca—writing at the cusp of the Constantinian period—drew a connection between demons and illicit ritual.[138] Likewise, post-Constantinian theologians associated demons with rituals they deemed inappropriate, often simultaneously linking such practices with categories of nefarious human Others (see below). Augustine of Hippo, for instance, attacks the theurgists' distinction between *goetia* and *theurgia* by claiming that *magia, goetia,* and *theurgia* all equally fall under the category '*ritibus fallacibus daemonum*' ('fallacious rites of demons').[139]

4.2 *Illegitimate Ritual and the Clarification of Ritual and Social Ambiguity*

Language of inappropriate ritual practice—whether expressly connected with demons—also helped clarify and shape the borders of social and ritual domains. Early Christian authors often pointed to μαγεία and the like to create and maintain their preferred boundaries between Christians and Others, especially when those boundaries were drawn in unsanctioned ways in social reality.[140] For instance, Justin Martyr made a clear contrast between Christian exorcists, who successfully cast out demons 'by the name of Jesus Christ,' and non-Christian ritual experts, who use inappropriate ritual techniques.[141] Jewish exorcists represent for Justin a key subcategory of non-Christian ritual experts who—like their gentile counterparts—use 'fumigations and binding adjurations' (θυμιάμασι καὶ καταδέσμοις).[142] Justin's rhetoric, therefore, was not simply about inappropriate ritual activity; the discourse of illicit ritual was

138 Arnobius of Sicca, *Adversus nationes*, 1.43.

139 Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 10.9. Cf. *De civitate Dei*, 9.1; 8.18,19; *De doctrina*, 2.20.30; *Sermo*, 198. On the demonic associations with divinatory rituals, see Augustine, *De divinitate daemonum*, 3.7; 8.22; cf. Augustine, *De divinitate daemonum*, 5.9. On Augustine and 'magic' more generally, see R.A. Markus, "Augustine on Magic: A Neglected Semiotic Theory," *Revue des études augustiniennes* 40 (1994): 375–88; F. Graf, "Augustine and Magic," in *The Metamorphosis of Magic*, 87–104. See also Eusebius of Caesarea, *Oration in Praise of Constantine*, 13.4.

140 See, for instance, Elaine Pagels' three-part series on the social history of Satan: E. Pagels, "The Social History of Satan, the 'Intimate Enemy': A Preliminary Sketch," *HTR* 84 (1991): 105–28; Pagels, "The Social History of Satan, Part II: Satan in the New Testament Gospels," *JAAR* 62 (1994) 187–215; "The Social History of Satan, Part Three: John of Patmos and Ignatius of Antioch: Contrasting Visions of 'God's People,'" *HTR* 99 (2006): 487–505.

141 See especially Justin Martyr, *2 Apologia*, 6.6. See also Justin Martyr *Dialogus*, 30.3; 76.6; *Dialogus*, 85.2; Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 1.67; 2.33; 3.24, 28. For discussion of Justin Martyr's approach to inappropriate vs. appropriate exorcistic activity, see Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," 1546.

142 Justin Martyr, *Dialogus*, 85.3.

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also one of his strategies for distinguishing Christians from Others, especially Jews.[143] Heresiologists, such as Irenaeus, claimed that all heresies (*haereses*) could be traced back to Simon Magus (*magus*).[144] It is not surprising that Irenaeus also accuses many of these alleged false teachers of being skilled in rituals and deceptions related to *magia* (e.g., *magicae imposturae*).[145] While Irenaeus condemned such activity, he was not primarily interested in illicit rituals.[146] Instead, this word group facilitated his larger plan of demarcating his preferred boundaries between Christian insiders and heretical outsiders.[147]

In post-Constantinian Christian discourse, rituals for healing and protection continued to function as a key discursive site for negotiating the boundaries of Christianity.[148] Augustine showcased ritual artifacts, such as *ligaturae* (suspended objects with incantations) and a 'ring' (*anulus*) with

143 For Justin's broader anti-Jewish invective, see T. Rajak, "Talking at Trypho: Christian Apologetic as Anti-Judaism in Justin's 'Dialogue with Trypho the Jew,'" in *The Jewish Debate with Greece and Rome: Studies in Cultural and Social Interaction*, ed. T. Rajak (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2001), 511–33; D. Rokeah, *Justin Martyr and the Jews* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002).

144 Esp. Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.*, 1.23; Cf. Justin Martyr, *1 Apologia,* 26.2, 4; 56.1; *Didascalia* 6.7–9.

145 Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.*, 1.13.1; 1.23.1, 4, 5; 1.24.5; 1.25.3.

146 The illicit rituals that fall under the category *magia* for Irenaeus include adjurations and incantations (*Adv. haer.*, 1.23.4), love charms (*Adv. haer.*, 1.13.5; 1.23.4; 1.25.3), and the use of *daimōn*-assistants and dream senders (*Adv. haer.*, 1.13.3; 1.23.4; 1.25.3).

147 See also e.g., Hippolytus of Rome, *Refutation of All Heresies* (a.k.a. *Elenchos*), IV 28–42; VI 7,1; VI 39,1; IX 14,2; IX 16, 1; X 29,3. James A. Kelhoffer has argued that the parallels between the *Refutation* and the rituals proscribed in the so-called Greek Magical Papyri (*PGM*) suggest that the writer used for his account source material from handbooks—though not necessarily the *PGM* in particular ('Hippolytus' and Magic: An Examination of *Elenchos* IV 28–42 and Related Passages in Light of the Papyri Graecae Magicae, *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 11 (2008): 517–48). Imperial law occasionally drew a connection between *maleficium* and heresy (cf. *CTh.* 16.5.34). For discussion, see M.V. Escribano Paño, "Heretical Texts and *maleficium* in the *Codex Thedosianus* (*CTh.* 16.5.34)," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West*, 105–38.

148 It might be tempting simply to associate the frequent Christian participation in indigenous practices with their general lack of respect for or knowledge of the boundaries between Christianity and local customs. But many leaders (e.g., Augustine and Chrysostom) often took for granted that the believers who visited local specialists or participated in local ritual practices otherwise held to clear-cut distinctions between Christians and non-Christians (Augustine, *In Evangelium Johannis tractatus*, 7.6.5; Chrysostom, *Adversus iudaeos*, 8.5.4.). The disjuncture between congregants and their leaders over local ritual practices, therefore, was not always centered on religious/ethnic boundaries *per se*, but rather, at least on occasion, revolved around the *particular configuration* of the boundaries between Christianity and local customs. On this point, see J.E. Sanzo, "Magic and Communal Boundaries: The Problems with Amulets in Chrysostom, *Adv. iud.* 8, and Augustine, *In Io. tra.* 7," *Henoch* 39.2 (2017): 227–46. It should be noted that concerns about religious/ethnic boundaries are also evident in the extant amuletic record itself (see

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healing powers, as heathen[149] and Jewish[150] foils to legitimate *Christian* objects and actors (e.g., gospel manuscripts and Christian martyrs). John Chrysostom likewise linked the production and use of ἐπῳδαί, περιάμματα, and the like with the Jews in order to erect his preferred bulwark between Christian and Jewish ideologies and social spaces.[151] Both Augustine and Chrysostom contrast those who use ritual objects for healing with martyrs, who remained faithful to the end despite their physical suffering.[152]

Illicit rites also functioned as a point of orientation for defining proper Christian ritual practice. Origen of Alexandria (185–254 CE) rejected Celsus' alleged claim that Christian clergy used ritual 'barbarous books that contain the names of daimones and wonders' (βιβλία βάρβαρα, δαιμόνων ὀνόματα ἔχοντα καὶ τερατείας).[153] Instead, he highlights that believers eschew ritual 'incantations' (κατακηλήσεσιν) and successfully cast out demons through proclamations of Jesus' name and via 'the recitation of narratives about him' (τῆς ἀπαγγελίας τῶν περὶ αὐτὸν ἱστοριῶν).[154] Illicit objects and rituals could also function as a metaphor for sanctioned Christian symbols and rituals. For instance, John Chrysostom mandated that catechumen renounce περίαπτα and ἐπῳδαί, illicit ritual objects and formulae respectively.[155] This renunciation, however, is immediately followed by Chrysostom's proclamation that the cross constitutes a 'marvelous περίαπτον and a great ἐπῳδήν,' and then by his blessing for the

R. Boustan and J.E. Sanzo, "Christian Magicians, Jewish Magical Idioms, and the Shared Magical Culture of Late Antiquity," *HTR* 110 (2017): 217–40, esp. 233–38).

149 *In Evangelium Johannis tractatus*, 7:12.

150 *De civitate dei* 22.8.

151 E.g., John Chrysostom, *Adversus iudaeos*, 8.5.6; cf. 8.6.10; Chrysostom also links illicit ritual to other groups, such as the Egyptians (Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Matthaeum*, 8).

152 E.g., Augustine, *Sermo*, 287.7; *Sermo*, 318.3; John Chrysostom, *Adversus iudaeos*, 8.7.3, 13; 8.8.4. Cf. Ambrose, *Ep.* 61. For comment on Chrysostom's deployment of this strategy, see e.g., Trzcionka, *Magic*, 122–23.

153 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 6.40; cf. *Contra Celsum*, 6.39. Celsus also apparently claimed that Jesus performed his miracles through γοητεία (e.g., Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 1.6; 2.49, 55). According to Matthew Dickie, Celsus was responding to traveling 'magicians' (*Magic*, 236–43). On the socio-political dimensions of Celsus' accusations of magic against Christians, see M. Choi, "Christianity, Magic, and Difference: Name-Calling and Resistance between the Lines in Contra Celsus," *Semeia* 79 (1997): 75–92.

154 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 1.6 (cf. *Contra Celsum*, 3.24; 8.61). For the relationship between Origen's words here and late antique amulets, see Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits*, 37–38.

155 John Chrysostom, *Catechesis*, 2.6 (trans. mine). For the text, see *Varia Graeca Sacra*, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus (Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1975), 172. Cf. Augustine, *De catechizandis rudibus*, 7.11; Martin of Braga, *Reforming the Rustics*, 16.

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'soul who recites the name of Jesus who was crucified' (ψυχὴ ἡ λέγουσα τὸ ὄνομα Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ σταυρωθέντος).

Ecclesiastical writers also drew clear lines between licit and illicit healing practices and professionals. Augustine, for instance, contrasted *superstitiosum* and *magicae artes* (e.g., *ligaturae* and *praecantationes*) with the approved activities of doctors.[156] Interestingly, however, ancient medical specialists themselves drew the lines between approved and unapproved healing practices differently than ecclesiastical leaders such as Augustine. Christopher Faraone has demonstrated that the purviews and interests of doctors and local ritual specialists overlapped considerably in late antiquity.[157] In this vein, the sixth-century CE physician Alexander of Tralles prescribed a remedy for colic that is virtually indistinguishable from contemporary φυλακτήρια.[158] Even Galen occasionally acknowledged the efficacy of ritual objects, despite his generally negative presentation of them.[159]

The paradigms of licit and illicit healing practices that Augustine and his ilk promoted also did not always match those of their congregations. The complaints of Christian participation in local customs of healing and protection, which pepper ecclesiastical texts from various regions of the ancient Mediterranean world, tacitly attest to a disjuncture between church leaders and their congregants over this topic.[160] Augustine himself lamented the Christian use of various objects and materials for healing, including *inaures* ('earrings'),[161] *struthionum ossa* ('ostrich bones'),[162] and herbs.[163] In Antioch, Chrysostom chastised as foolish the practice of tying prophylactic objects to

156 Augustine, *De doctrina*, 2.20.30. In fact, Augustine claims that doctors likewise condemned such practices (*medicorum quoque disciplina condemnat*). Cf. Augustine, *De doctrina*, 2.29.45; *De civitate dei* 8.19; 8.22; 10.9.

157 C.A. Faraone, "Magic and Medicine in the Roman Imperial Period: Two Case Studies," in *Continuity and Innovation in the Magical Tradition*, ed. G. Bohak, Y. Harari, and S. Shaked (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2011), 135–57.

158 *Therapeutics*, 8.2 (on colic).

159 *De simplicium medicamentorum temperamentis ac facultatibus*, 6.10. Cf. also the writings of Julius Africanus and related texts (e.g., *Cesti*, F12,17; F77). For discussion, see Thee, *Julius Africanus*, 193–309; M. Wallraff, "Magie und Religion in den Kestoi des Julius Africanus," in *Die Kestoi des Julius Africanus und ihre Überlieferung*, ed. M. Wallraff and L. Mecella (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 39–52.

160 On the local customs of Gaul during late antiquity, see W.E. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 209–26.

161 Augustine, *Ep*. 245.2; Augustine, *De doctrina*, 2.20.30.

162 Augustine, *De doctrina*, 2.20.30.

163 Augustine, *De doctrina*, 2.29.45; cf. Eusebius, *Demonstratio evangelica*, 3.6.

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newborn babies.[164] Shenoute of Atripe condemns people for visiting monks who prescribed remedies, such as snakes' heads (ϩⲉⲛⲁⲡⲉ ⲛϩⲟⲩ), crocodiles' teeth (ϩⲉⲛⲛⲁϫⲉ ⲛⲙⲥⲁϩ), or fox claws (ϩⲉⲛⲓⲉⲓⲃ ⲛⲃⲁϣⲟⲣ).[165] The sixth-century CE Portuguese bishop Martin of Braga connects local practices, such as lighting candles beside rocks and trees and throwing bread into a fountain, with *divinationes* and *maleficia* and viewed such customs as tantamount to devil worship (*cultura diaboli*).[166]

But bishops and other ecclesiastical leaders not only had to grapple with the participation of Christians in local rites and customs. Developments in Christian material culture also confronted ecclesiastical leadership with new curative and apotropaic rituals, which mapped Christian elements onto indigenous precedents and were typically performed in contexts outside or at the margins of episcopal control. Indeed, the extant material record testifies to a proliferation of healing and protective objects,[167] *eulogiai* (e.g., clay tokens and flasks containing oil),[168] and other materials invoking biblical heroes or associated with the cults of martyrs and saints.[169] This material record is

164 Chrysostom, *Homiliae in epistulam i ad Corinthios*, 12. Cf. Tertullian, *De anima*, 39. On the use of illicit rituals on behalf of children, see e.g., Chysostom, *Homiliae in epistulam ad Colossenses*, 8; Gregory Nazianzus, *In sanctum baptisma*, 36.381; Basil, *Homiliae in Psalmum*, 45. The frequent use of amulets and the like for children was no doubt based on high infant mortality rates in antiquity (Stander, "Amulets," 60; cf. R. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994], 182).

165 Shenoute, Acephalous work A14§§ 255–59, ed. T. Orlandi, *Shenute: Contra Origenistas* (Rome: CIM, 1985), 18–20). For discussion, see D. Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt: Syncretism and Local Worlds in Late Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 60–69. Cf. Ps-Athanasius, *Homily on Virginity* 92 and 95. On the textual problems with Shenoute, Acephalous work A14, see S. Emmel, *Shenoute's Literary Corpus*, 2 vols. (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 2: 692–93. On the relationship between monks and 'magic,' see Frankfurter, "Dynamics of Ritual Expertise," 167–70; D. Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 226–39.

166 Martin of Braga, *Reforming the Rustics*, 16. Cf. *CTh* 16.10.12. For discussion, see Frankfurter, "Beyond Magic and Superstition," 264–65.

167 See esp. T.S. de Bruyn, "Papyri, Parchments, Ostraca, and Tablets Written with Biblical Texts in Greek and Used as Amulets: A Preliminary List," in *Early Christian Manuscripts: Examples of Applied Method and Approach*, ed. T.J. Kraus and T. Nicklas (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2010), 145–89; Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits*; B.C. Jones, *New Testament Texts on Greek Amulets from Late Antiquity* (London: T&T Clark, 2016).

168 E.g., J.C. Skedros, "Shrines, Festivals, and the 'Undistinguished Mob,'" in *Byzantine Christianity*, ed. D. Krueger (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 81–102 at 91–94.

169 E.g., P. Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981); D. Frankfurter, "Syncretism and the Holy Man in Late Antique Egypt," *JECS* 11 (2003) 339–85; P.C. Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination: Signifying the Holy in Late Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2009).

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corroborated by literary sources, which likewise testify to the apotropaic, curative, and prophetic use of miniature biblical artifacts,[170] crosses,[171] and even the Eucharistic host.[172] How ought Christian leaders approach such ambiguous artifacts and rituals? Should they be promoted, tolerated, or condemned? Not surprisingly, church officials, operating at different times and in different regions of the empire, came to different conclusions about such ambiguous rituals.

While ritual objects inscribed solely with unusual marks or names of traditional deities could be condemned as non-Christian with relative ease,[173] rituals and objects associated with the Bible or saints naturally posed greater taxonomic difficulty for ecclesiastical leadership. The diverse practices and gestures associated with saints' shrines (e.g., incubations, uses of oils, and dancing[174]), for instance, elicited different ecclesiastical responses, including promotion,[175] scorn,[176] and condemnation.[177] The curative and apotropaic use of biblical artifacts likewise posed challenges for church leaders. We have already witnessed Origen's promotion of the *recitation* (ἀπαγγελία) of Jesus' name and stories about him in contrast to invocations to demons. Church leaders writing in subsequent periods, however, needed to focus their attention on biblical *objects*, which at times could resemble devices associated with disapproved rituals. For instance, Augustine went to great lengths to draw a hard-and-fast distinction

170 E.g., Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca*, 8.1–3; Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Confessors*, 22. For the use of sacred books for various ritual purposes, see C. Rapp, "Holy Texts, Holy Men, and Holy Scribes: Aspects of Scriptural Holiness in Late Antiquity," in *The Early Christian Book*, ed. W.E. Klingshirn and L. Safran (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 194–224.

171 E.g., Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Sanctae Macrinae*.

172 E.g., Ambrose, *De excessu fratris sui Satyri* 43; Gregory of Nazianzus, *On the Death of His Father*. For discussion, see V. Limberis, "The Cult of the Martyrs and the Cappadocian Fathers," in *Byzantine Christianity*, 50–54.

173 On the use of marks, see Basil, *Hom. In Psalm.* 45; Augustine, *De doctrina*, 2.20.30; Caesarius of Arles, *Sermo*, 204. It is likely that these marks reflect the use of *charaktēres*, which proliferated in *grimoires* and applied artifacts during late antiquity and beyond. For a recent analysis of this practice, see R. Gordon, "*Charaktēres* between Antiquity and Renaissance: Transmission and Re-Invention," in *Les savoirs magiques et leur transmission de l'antiquité à la Renaissance*, ed. V. Dasen and J.-M. Spieser (Florence: Sismel, 2014) 253–300, and below, Frankfurter, Chapter 23. Names of traditional deities: see Chrysostom, *Homiliae in epistulam ad Colossenses* 8, who describes the amuletic use of rivers' names.

174 See n. 176 below.

175 E.g., Theodoret, *Therapeutike* 8.68–70; Gregory of Tours, *Miracles of St. Martin* 4.36; Sophronius, *The Miracles of Ss. Cyril and John* 35 and 55.

176 E.g., Evagrius Scholasticus, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 1.14.

177 E.g., Athanasius, *Festal Letter*, 42; cf. *CTh.*, 16.10.10. For discussion of the various approaches to shrines, see Frankfurter, "Beyond Magic and Superstition," 263.

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between the inappropriate use of *ligaturae*—including those that 'mix' (*miscere*) Jesus' name into their incantations—and the appropriate use of biblical artifacts for healing.[178] Chrysostom somewhat begrudgingly approved of the suspension of biblical artifacts on bedposts for healing—though he frames it as an inferior ritual practice to the giving of alms.[179] Caesarius of Arles, however, disapproved of any such objects; for him, Christians could turn instead to what he regarded as proper rituals for protection and healing, such as the celebration of the Eucharist and the unction for the sick.[180]

The production and use of φυλακτήρια constituted another ambiguous ritual practice that, accordingly, elicited different opinions within ecclesiastical discourse.[181] We have already seen how the so-called 'Laodicean' canon deemed φυλακτήρια 'chains of the soul' and mandated excommunication for those who made and used them. Yet not all Christians took such a hardline stance against φυλακτήρια. Much of the discussion around φυλακτήρια took place in response to Matthew 23:5 ("But they [Pharisees and scribes] do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries [φυλακτήρια] and lengthen the tassels of their garments"), the only New Testament passage in which this term is found.[182] Early Christian commentators stressed different aspects of this passage. Some commentators simply highlighted the evils of public spectacle.[183] Yet others emphasized the ritual dimensions of φυλακτήρια. St. Jerome, for instance, drew a connection between the lack of knowledge of the Pharisees, who believed that these objects (*phylacteria*) could protect them, and 'superstitious women' (*superstitiosae mulierculae*) who possessed 'little Gospels' (*parvulis evangeliis*).[184] In a slightly less derogatory tone, John

178 *In Evangelium Johannis tractatus*, 7. On the likelihood that this passage envisioned small manuscripts with only selections from the gospels, see n. 185 below.

179 John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in epistulam I ad Corinthios*, 16.9.7.

180 Caesarius of Arles, *Sermo*, 50.1. Cf. Caesarius of Arles, *Sermo*, 13.5; Martin of Braga, *Reforming the Rustics*, 16.

181 Church fathers took a more universally negative approach to other terms, such as *ligaturae*, ἐπῳδαί and περιάμματα (e.g., Gregory Nazianzus, *In sanctum baptisma*, 36.381; Eusebius, *Demonstratio evangelica*, 6.3; Augustine, *Epistula*, 245; *Sermo*, 4.36; *In Evangelium Johannis tractatus*, 7; Athanasius, *De amuletis*; Basil, *Homilia in Psalmum* 45; Chrysostom, *In epistulam ad Colossenses*, 8).

182 Within the context of Matthew, φυλακτήρια referred to the Jewish *tefillin*, tiny capsules that contained passages from the Pentateuch (Ex 13:1–10; 13:11–16; Deut 6:4–9; 11:13–21) and that were worn on the forehead or arm. In antiquity, the *tefillin* often served an apotropaic function. For discussion, see Y. Cohn, *Tangled Up in Text: Tefillin in the Ancient World* (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2008); R.S. Fagen, "Phylacteries," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 5 vols. (New York: Yale University Press, 1992), 5: 368–79.

183 E.g., Origen, *Commentary on Matthew* 11; Epiphanius, *Adversus Haereses*, 25.209.

184 Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, 4.23.5.

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Chrysostom also drew a comparison between the use of φυλακτήρια by the Pharisees and the suspension of 'Gospels' (εὐαγγέλια) around the necks of many women.[185] Although these authors—especially Jerome—present the women's uses of objects related to φυλακτήρια in rather unflattering ways, neither of them goes as far as the 'Laodicean' canon in calling for excommunication.[186] The approach of these authors to protective rituals, therefore, demonstrates that the local and occasional concerns of church leaders sometimes required them to adopt a posture toward ritual more closely aligned with imperial law (cf. the *Theodosian Code*) than with ecclesiastical edicts from other regions.

4.2.1 The Discursive Contexts of Illegitimate and Ambiguous Rituals: Conclusions

Illegitimate and ambiguous rituals constituted important discursive sites on which the emergent Christian movements imagined, shaped, and defended their social relations and practices. More often than not discussions of illegitimate ritual functioned as a means of discrediting and maligning rivals and adversaries. Jewish, heretical, and local practices were associated or conflated with ritual activities simultaneously deemed inappropriate, demonic, impious, or foolish. An adroit reference or allusion to an illegitimate ritual could, therefore, apply clarity and definition to religious boundaries (non-Christian vs. Christian) and healing practices (e.g., doctors vs. ritual experts), which were often characterized by diverse opinions, ambiguities, and complexities in ancient social existence. As Christianization impacted various dimensions of social life—albeit unevenly within and across institutional, regional,

185 *Homiliae in Matthaeum*, 72. Chrysostom here is almost certainly referring to artifacts with a few Gospel passages and not entire codices. For discussion, see e.g., De Bruyn, "Papyri, Parchments," 160; Stander, "Amulets," 57; Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits*, 161–65.

186 The broader Greco-Roman literary motif, which linked illicit or ambiguous ritual practice with women (e.g., Ovid, *Fasti*, 2.571–83; Lucian of Samosata, *Dialogues of the Courtesans* 4), made an impact on early Christian authors (e.g., Chrysostom, *De statuis ad populum Antiochenum hom.* 9; Chrysostom, *In epistulam ad Colossenses*, 8; Athanasius, *De amuletis*; Caesarius of Arles, *Sermo*, 52.6). On the social function of this motif within early Christianity, see D.S. Kalleres, "Drunken Hags with Amulets and Prostitutes with Erotic Spells: The *Re*-Feminization of Magic in Late Antique Christian Homilies," in *Daughters of Hecate: Women & Magic in the Ancient World*, ed. K.B. Stratton with D.S. Kalleres (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 219–51. We should not, therefore, assume that women were especially attracted to such ritual activities in social reality (*contra* A.D. Vakaloudi, "ΔΕΙΣΙΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΑ and the Role of the Apotropaic Magic Amulets in the Early Byzantine Empire," *Byzantion* 70 [2000]: 182–210 at 189). Onomastic analysis of the extant amulets from late antiquity suggest that both men (e.g., P. Oxy. LXV 4469, BGU III 954, and P. Berol. 21911) and women (e.g., P. Oxy. VI 924, P. Oxy. VIII 1151, and PSI inv. 365) used such ritual objects.

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and scribal registers—writers also needed to approach ritual practices with new questions and concerns in mind. Indeed, traditional and local religiosity absorbed Christian symbols, spaces, and actors, thus requiring bishops and other church leaders to make difficult decisions about the appropriate limits of Christian ritual. Should the faithful suspend things around their necks or touch objects for healing? What about objects inscribed with biblical passages? Should believers visit the shrines of saints and martyrs? If so, what are they permitted to do there? It is perhaps not surprising that the extant record reveals that such questions elicited divergent responses among ecclesiastical leaders.

5 Conclusions

This survey of illicit, ambiguous, and exotic rituals in early Christian literature has traversed several temporal periods and spatial terrains. I hope this essay has shown that ancient Christian depictions of rituals and terms that modern scholars have often associated with the term magic cannot be reduced to facile narratives of rejection, persecution, or acceptance. Neither can we trace the growth and development of conceptions of illicit or ambiguous rituals within early Christian literature along a straight linear trajectory of increasing complexity, definition, or condemnation. Indeed, language tied to illegitimate and ambiguous rituals was deployed in myriad ways throughout Christian history.

Despite the diversity and complexity of the extant evidence, however, a few general observations can be made. For instance, certain continuities in the depiction of ritual persisted more or less throughout early Christian literature: e.g., the negative associations with terms, such as φαρμακεία; the considerable overlap between the rites, gestures, and formulae of licit and illicit ritual experts; the alignment of illicit ritual with cultural and religious Others; and the connection of illicit rituals with demons (esp. post-New Testament). At the same time, our analysis of the extant literary record has also revealed important ruptures and developments in ideas about ritual practice over the first centuries of Christianity. Large-scale shifts have especially come into sharper relief by comparing the ends of the temporal spectrum. The narrative descriptions of Simon 'Magus,' for instance, in the canonical Acts of the Apostles, on the one hand, and in the *Actus Ver.*, on the other hand, reflect remarkably different emphases and understandings of illegitimate ritual. The *Actus Ver.* not only placed a much greater emphasis on illicit ritual, but it also deployed a much more robust ritual vocabulary. This expansion of terms and expressions specifically pertaining to negative ritual worked in dialogue with the

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emergence in Christianity—and in imperial legislation—of forbidden ritual as an independent concept. In this vein, the lists buried in Galatians and in the Book of Revelation, which appear to include illegitimate rituals alongside various other sins, are conceptually distant from the discrete lists of deviant ritual actors found in the canons of Pseudo-Athanasius and especially in the so-called 'Laodicea' canon. To be sure, hints of this later conception of illicit ritual already appear in the *Didache*, which groups various kinds of ritual practices and actors together (e.g., μαγεία, φαρμακεία, οἰωνοσκόπος, ἐπαοιδὸς, μαθηματικὸς). What is more, the evolution of (il)legitimate ritual did not take place in an intellectual and cultural vacuum. The development of illicit ritual occurred in conjunction with a host of socio-political factors, including the appropriation of new genres, imperial interests in suppressing potentially seditious ritual activity, and ecclesiastical efforts to reign in local customs. On a more general level, this epistemic development in illegitimate ritual was probably part of the broader movement within the Greco-Roman world toward something like our modern category religion.[187]

We must bear in mind, however, that the intellectual shifts and discourses highlighted in this paper took place among a small, cloistered fraction of early Jesus followers. If we read between the lines of these proscriptive Christian texts (and take into consideration the extant material record), we quickly discover that a sizable number of Christians—if not a majority—found nothing incompatible between following Jesus and visiting local specialists to acquire curative or protective objects or to receive information about the future. To the extent that it was known or understood, the emerging conceptualization of illegitimate ritual for many of these believers would have probably constituted little more than a "highfalutin" abstraction by out-of-touch priests and bishops.

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187 Rives, "Magic in Roman Law," 335.

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Suggested Readings

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